



Gustavus Adolphus

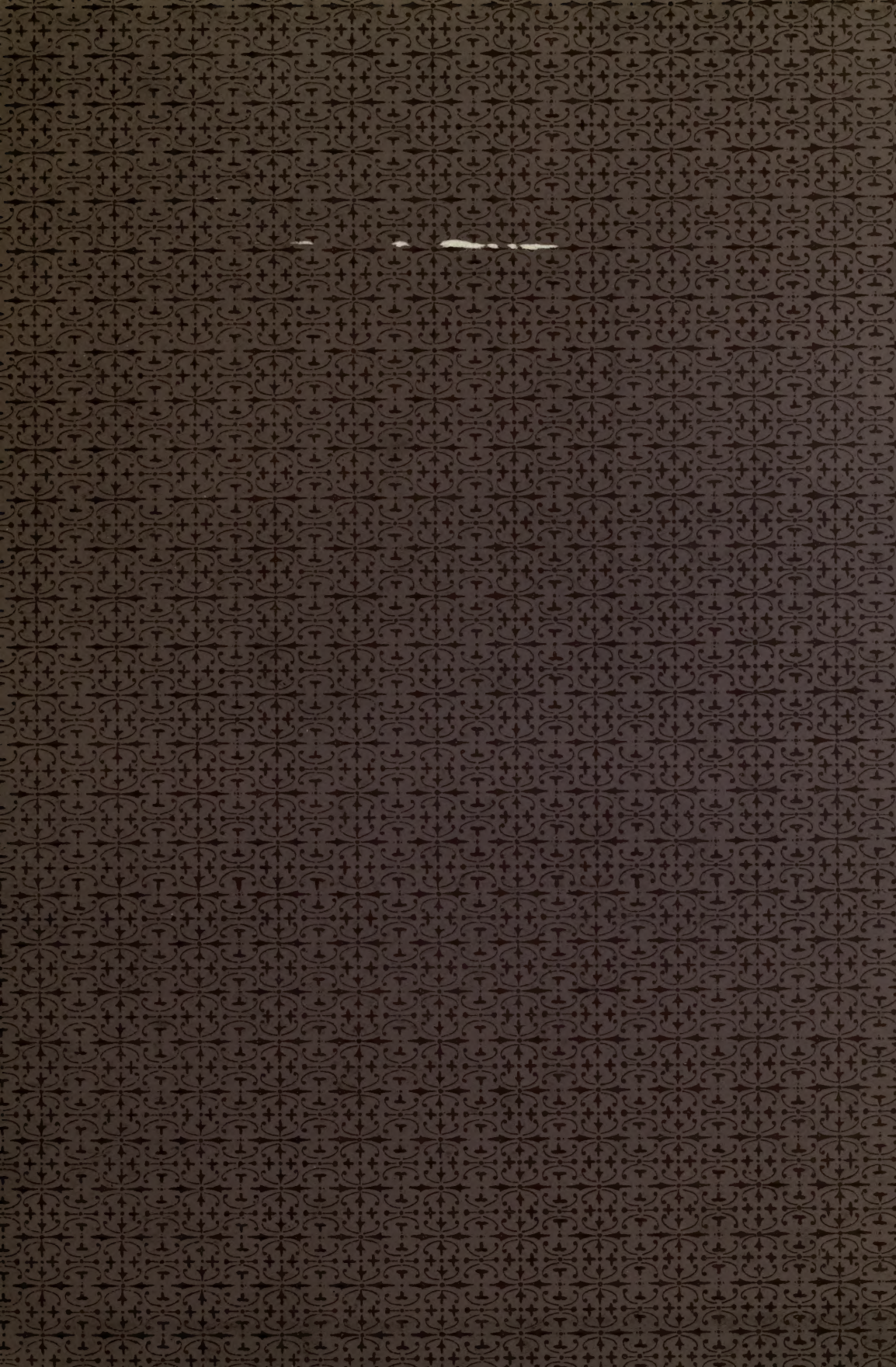
By
F. P. Swinborne






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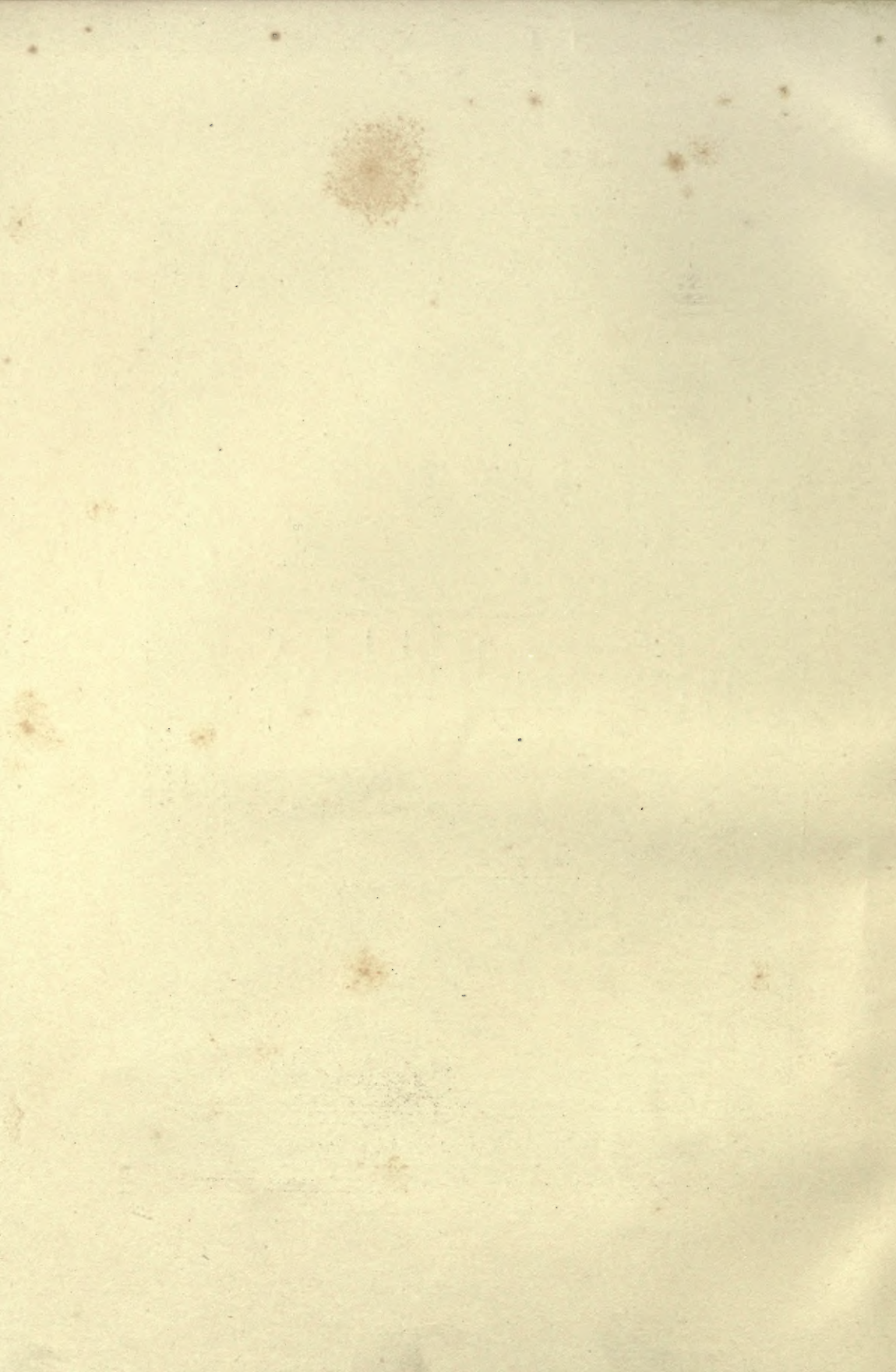


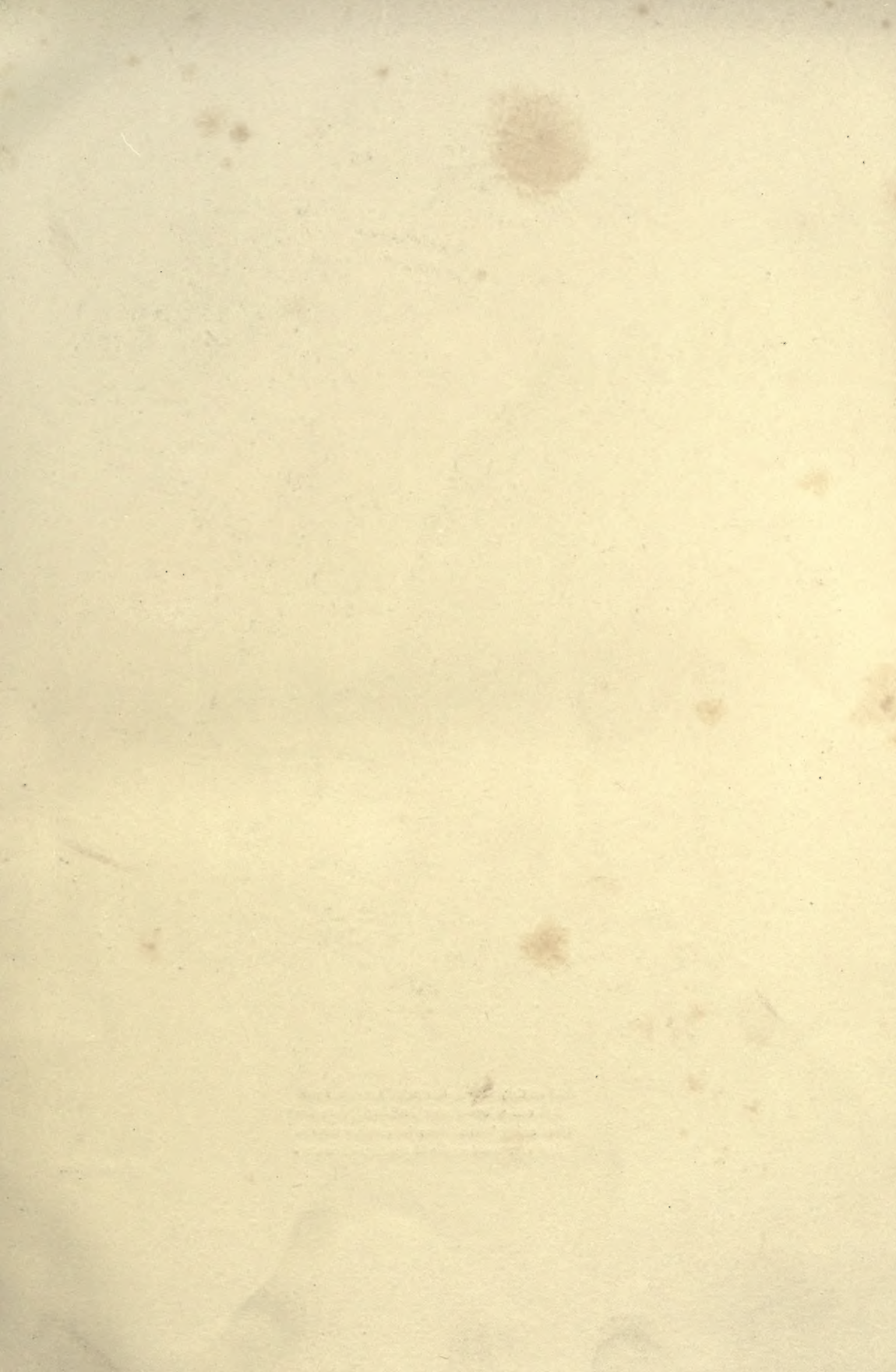
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Gustavus Adolphus









And so they listen, standing there entranced
By such a lovely scene and such sweet tones:
The leaping Rhine in sunlit wavelets danced,
And ever murmur'd still the ripple's moans.

[Frontispiece.]

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS:

An Historical Poem

AND ROMANCE OF THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR.

BY

FREDERICK PFANDER SWINBORNE.

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Foot-prints on the sands of time."—LONGFELLOW.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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PREFACE.



THE following pages owe their inspiration to hero-worship—to a sincere and even enthusiastic admiration for the gallant King of Sweden, whose glorious achievements they record, and whose noble character and generous sentiments they seek to illustrate. The Author, fully sensible of the inadequacy of his powers to do justice to the theme, still feels that no worthier subject could fill the pages of poet or historian. Among modern heroes the great Gustavus Adolphus stands forth, conspicuous no less for his moral excellence than for his soldierly qualities, his dauntless courage, stubborn perseverance, fertility of resource, and consummate skill. His life and actions are well known, and will not soon be forgotten either by Protestants or Catholics. Not only in works devoted to his personal biography, but also in those treating of the Thirty Years' War, he has received that abundant eulogy he so well merited. The greatest Genius of his age, his failings were more venial, his errors fewer and slighter, than those usually incidental to men of heroic mould; neither contemporary jealousy nor envious time, which has sapped so many reputations, has cast a doubt on the purity of his motives or the honesty of his purposes. Falling on the battle-field, a brave soldier's fittest death scene, he was fortunate in dying in the bright meridian of his powers and success: his sun went down in the very noon-tide of

his glory, before his brilliant career was obscured by failing vigour, or could be tarnished by possible lapses of treachery or excess. Ever occupying a foremost place among the champions of Faith and Freedom, during the latter portion of his life he assumes a yet higher position, and becomes the recognised soldier-hero of the Reformation, the military Luther of Protestantism, a warrior who fought for peace, and was forced even fanatically to oppose fanaticism.

With the serious history of Gustavus Adolphus and "the big wars that make ambition virtue" is interwoven, in accordance with the best precedents, the love-story of Eric and Hilda, the lighter interest of which the Author hopes may serve to agreeably relieve the monotony of a description of forced marches, sieges, and battles, even though the horrors of these be thereby heightened.

The introduction of twelve original illustrations, depicting some of the scenes and incidents described in the poem, may also, it is thought, increase the interest and attractiveness of the work.



GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS.



INTRODUCTION.

RELIGION! in thy name what dire distress,
Through the long centuries—what wretchedness—

The nations suffer: all for thee!

Alas! this nineteenth even cannot claim
Immunity from having stain'd thy name

With blood. Despots and Kings we see,
And Priests, who scruple not their ends to gain;
Statesmen and Soldiers, too, with lips profane

Invoke thy name and Liberty's.

These sacred names they utter while they forge
Fresh fetters for mankind and fiercer scourge,

More hateful weave anew their ties;—
Caring, it seems, for nought, if but success
Their means may sanctify. So on they press

Through blood, through misery, to their end:
Their tottering thrones they must secure, of cost
Regardless. Are their haughty wills but cross'd,

Their subjects' treasure straight they spend.
Oh, were it treasure mere!—had they no power
To sacrifice to need of passing hour

Their subjects' lives, nor blood to spill,
Nor millions arm'd on millions hurl, nor war's
Fierce flame to kindle for unrighteous cause!

Must this still be? Must all this ill
Be heap'd on Man by Man? Is there no cure?
Must Europe yet for centuries endure?

Or dare she hope her chains to burst ?
What then would happen ?—Can it never be ?
Must thy roots strike for ages, Liberty,

Ere they can brave the storm accurst—
The withering blasts of Riot and Excess ?—
Thy tender plant again to earth they press,
And yield the pretext that his band
The Despot tighter rivets. Thus the round
Goes on—one tyrant falls, another's found.

Mob Violence next stalks the land,
Whose will is law, whose terrible decrees
Fulfill'd, the world in awe and wonder sees,—
Fulfill'd in flame, and lust, and blood.

In Reign of Terror wild the Spectre Red
Consumed itself—to death its votaries led.

The torrent burst in mighty flood,
O'swept the ancient landmarks, in its course
All ranks commingling as with whirlpool force,
Equal in misery at last.

Ye struggling nations ! never hope to rear
In such a manner Freedom's tree ; but fear

To loose, ere yet the bounds are past,
The pent-up flood of passion, nor desire
To fan the flames of Revolution's fire,

And class with class in strife to see !
Excess can never flourish ! Let your end
Be less new laws to frame than bad to mend :

Thus shall ye rear Fair Freedom's tree ;—
Rememb'ring ever, if it be to stand,
Religion,—Freedom,—must go hand in hand !

Religion,—Freedom,—holy battle cry !
For you the Patriot feareth not to die,

But thinketh ever death is gain ;
But war he doth not seek, nor doth pursue

Fame's fleeting shadow. No, his heart is true,—
Your sacred names he would not stain !
How then, proud Despot of the North, dar'st thou
Their holy titles grave upon thy brow,—
Thyself their champion constitute ?
How dar'st thou claim from galling foreign yoke
To free thy brethren with heroic stroke,
When Freedom in thy land 's no root ?
How dar'st thou wage in True Religion's name
Offensive, not defensive war?—Thy claim
Religion,—Freedom,—will not own !—
Dar'st thou in such a fight to fall ? Thy horde
Of armèd hosts thyself to lead,—and sword
To sword with foe to close?—Be 't known
To thee, the world thy hollow pretext sees,
Thy lust of empire, and thy love of ease :
'Tis not Religion mans thine arm,
But Russian thirst for conquest, and the fear
Lest quiet times should let Rebellion rear
Its head—and thou shouldst come to harm !*
A Hero of far different mould I sing :
All lands to him shall willing tribute bring ;
His fame can not resound too far !
Gustavus, King of Sweden, who his life
Gave free for Freedom, in defensive strife,
The Hero of Religion's war.
He sought not selfish empire to extend,
Nor dared *he* Sweden's blood and treasure spend
For glory or for fleeting fame ;—
Far less lest quiet should rebellion breed :
Such coward fears a hero scorns to heed.
He gain'd an everlasting name !
No lord of armèd millions he—his land

* Written in 1880.

Among the poorest—yet he stretch'd his hand
To succour at his brethren's call.
No holy championship he claim'd; his best
He did,—secure to Heaven he left the rest,
And Heaven in answer gave him all.
In Victory he fell; in two short years
He banish'd Freedom's and Religion's fears
And Europe freed from her alarms.
The world no conqueror has ever seen
Like him; and tyrants there had never been
Had Gustave's spirit sway'd their arms





BOOK I.

Historical and Introductory.

FIVE years had lasted now the war,
And Germany had suffer'd sore,
But was to suffer far, far more!
Mansfeld to Holland had been driven,
Brunswick in vain 'gainst Tilly striven;
The Elector Frederick under ban
Exiled, and Maximilian,
Bavaria's Duke, received commands
To seize upon and hold his lands.
And now to those who freely bled
For Luther's Cause, was left no Head;
And had for peace the Kaiser cared,
His peoples' plaints had only heard,
What misery Europe had been spared!

It was not so to be! The brand
That they had kindled in his land
Should not die out in compromise;
With victory his terms must rise!
Rome's priests all peaceful counsels spurn'd,
The Kaiser still from mercy turn'd;
The League to Tilly gave command
That he throughout the northern land

Still greater musters yet should raise ;
And horror-struck in dread amaze
The world look'd on while thus the blaze,
When nearly spent, they fann'd anew,
And fuel on the embers threw.

Soon Mecklenburg and Brunswick arm'd,
And Magdeburg, at length alarm'd,
Her weapons seized in self-defence,
Not war to wage their present sense ;
But Faith and Liberty secure
They could not feel, nor were they sure
Where next the threatening armament
With fire and sword might not be sent,
They justly fear'd dread Rome's intent.
And Denmark's King, as Holstein's lord,
Threw in with them his lot and sword.
The Kaiser, as their sovereign liege,
Swore then their towns he would besiege,
Their farms lay waste with flaming brand,
Ravage and plunder all the land,
Unless their weapons they laid down
And sued for pardon from the Crown.

They answer'd,—They did not rebel,
But for their Faith their lives would sell
If need be ; Rome they knew too well ;
They could not trust the Catholic League ;
They fear'd the Jesuit's dark intrigue.
In the just Cause their fathers bled,
They were prepared their blood to shed ;
War to provoke they had no thought,
To hold their rights they only sought ;
Gladly indeed they would disarm,
Were Faith and life secure from harm.

A curt reply made Ferdinand,
And Tilly then received command
To overrun and waste the land :
By his advisers he was told
The northern States this force enroll'd
The banish'd Frederick's cause to aid ;
The Jesuits also were afraid
Such opportunity once lost
Might not recur, and thus they forced
The issue on : and Denmark's King
Push'd forward, to their aid to bring
An army sixty thousand strong ;
Thinking to him 'twould now belong
To uphold their right 'gainst Jesuit wrong,
As Lutheran champion to pose
Victorious over Freedom's foes.
He fondly hoped by one campaign
Undying laurels thus to gain ;
But still, it seem'd, he stood in awe
Of Tilly's veterans used to war,
For keeping still the foe in sight
He carefully avoided fight.

Thus far the Kaiser Ferdinand
Had overrun the German land
With armies ready to his hand,
Those of the League—yet scarce could call
His victories his own at all.
The Grand-duke Maximilian
Held chief command, and he began
To fear Bavaria's rising day
Would e'en eclipse his paling ray.
On Tilly, who throughout the war
The palm of victory ever bore,
He had no claim as subject born ;

With anxious doubts his mind was torn,
It seem'd the laurels he had worn,
His empire schemes all suffering wreck,
Would other brows than his bedeck.

E'er since the tide of war had turn'd
For universal rule he burn'd;
But, as he lack'd the power thereto,
His Austrian regiments being few,
No armies standing in his pay,
He could not hope to make his way
Secure with Maximilian's force ;—
Nor dared to venture on such course
Unless he were himself the source
Of all the German power enroll'd ;
And then he lack'd the needful gold.
Though he could count on Rome's intrigue,
Too powerful was this Catholic League :
He clearly saw alike would turn
Catholics and Protestants to spurn
His high pretensions, when they knew
The purposes he had in view.

While still the Kaiser counsel sought,
To him in evil hour was brought
A scheme which full solution wrought.
This scheme was Wallenstein's, a name
For years to come wide known to fame,
Resounding far through Europe's land,—
A hated name ! and cursed his hand,
Which on his suffering country laid
The Kaiser's trust so ill repaid !

His fathers were of gentle birth,
And he himself had proved his worth

In many a hard contested fight :
He promised now that Austria's might
Supreme should soar, grant him the right
Armies to raise on German land,
Himself to wield supreme command.
The Kaiser need not count the cost,
Exactions from his foes enforced
Should aye the Austrian power maintain,
The proud supremacy retain
Which Hapsburg hitherto had held,
And Germany together weld.

This offer seem'd but poor advice :
The Council smiled, but still the price
Was harmless, so, on thinking twice,
The Kaiser said that Wallenstein
Might, if he chose, try his design.
And gave him powers to marshal all
Whom to his banners he could call,—
A force of twenty thousand men,
All at his own expense,—and then
He should command, bearing in mind
Nor arms nor pay would Austria find.

Said Wallenstein, "No,—such array,
Though much too small, I could not pay ;
But I with fifty thousand may
Be strong enough to keep the field,—
The powers entrusted me to wield
With credit at the foe's expense.
Ye soon shall own mine offer's sense—
The army I'll equip and arm,
And how to pay will not alarm ;
But fifty thousand are the least
With which I'll venture.—Them I'll feast

Upon the best, with them I'll carve
My way.—This force I cannot halve—
For twenty thousand would but starve,
Powerless to tax the burgher's gold,
Much more one single State to hold."

The Kaiser and the Council thought
An army that would cost them nought
Was not to be refused, and gave
The General all he dared to crave,
But named the towns—and not too near—
His mustering banners where to rear.

With glad surprise full soon they found
Adventurers had flock'd around

His standards, and on German ground,
For first time in this awful war
Europe Imperial forces saw.
With Wallenstein well pleased, they made
Him Duke of Friedland, and they bade
Him march to stem invasion's tide,
And break, with Tilly, Denmark's pride.
They little thought in that proud hour
He would abuse the Kaiser's power.

In boyhood he could brook no rule,—
At Goldberg, where he went to school,
He made each playmate soon his tool,
And led the Rector such a dance
That they nicknamed him the "Free-lance."
At Altdorf, where he next was sent,
Within the Carcer he was pent;
But foremost still in every riot,
He caused such outbreak and disquiet,
The learnèd Doctors council held,
And sent him home disgraced, expell'd.

The Margrave's page at Burgau's court
He then became, and there was wrought
A miracle. One day he sought
The castle's giddy topmost height,
Whence, waking up from sleep in fright,
Down to the ground he headlong fell,
Yet rose unhurt, most strange to tell.
Being so wonderfully spared
Convinced him great things were prepared
For him in future. Thence he went
To Holland, was to England sent ;
France, Italy, in turn he saw,
And studied still the art of war :
At Padua next he stay'd, the lore
To learn for which the place was famed ;
And there it chanced one Seni claim'd
The favour of his patronage :
"For I have read," so said the Sage,
"The stars, and in them traced the course
Which thou must follow, yea, perforce."
And ever since that fateful day
Seni retain'd he in his pay,
And ventured on no enterprise
Without consulting first the skies,
And to the setting and the rise
Of stars, whose courses for him ran,
Had alter'd more than once his plan.
Astronomy became his passion,
Seni his sole friend in this fashion ;
For ever still the artful Sage
Hail'd him the greatest of his age,
Assured him, pointing to his star,
His might would stretch through Europe far.

The Austrian service next he took,
But soon the camp for love forsook, —

Upon a widow rich his look
Was cast. He married, she was old
(In fewest words the tale is told)
As well as rich,—ere long she died,
Then to the camp again he hied.
Bohemia's wealthiest lord was he,—
He fought full well in Hungary,
'Gainst Venice, Turkey, in the riot,
Which in Bohemia broke the quiet
Of Europe, now five years ago,
And was the cause of all the woe,—
Of pent-up hatred loosed the flow,
Which through all Germany the lands
O'erwhelm'd with savage, lawless bands.
A thriving country, desolate,
Then yielded, such its awful fate,
Instead of vines' rich clusters red,
And the fat corn's low-bending head,
But widows' and the orphans' tears,—
For the war lasted thirty years.

From this time forth his constant care
Was ever best how to prepare
His future glory, how best bear
Himself to win applause. His tables
To friends were free, free too his stables,—
At their command his choicest wine
Flow'd fast like water ; all, in fine,
Treasure and goods, on them he spent ;
To every borrower he lent
The sums that he required, if he
A future tool in him could see.

He gain'd fresh wealth in each campaign,
Heaven seem'd on him its gifts to rain,

Of Wallenstein men could not fain
But talk, for if he only could
Excite their wonder all was good.
At Prague his daring to such height
He carried, reckless in the fight,
Careless of life, his soldiers all
Stood still amazed.—Now at his call,
As soon as e'er he beats the drum,
From every land adventurers come ;
Even reigning princes feel no shame
With him to serve and share his fame,
So world-wide known is Friedland's name.

Lavish of promises and gold,
Full soon an army he enroll'd ;
And, heading twenty thousand men,
Broke up his rallying camps, and then
To Mecklenburg he took the road,
Towards Magdeburg his forces flow'd ;
And ever to his standards more
Adventurers flock'd to join the war.
On Saxon ground he held review,
His might now multiplied by two,
For day by day his forces grew :
Feeling he now could take the field,
With power sufficient him to shield,
He dared to turn the army's course
To Dessau, and encamp'd his force ;
And ravaged all the fertile lands
Along the Elbe with plundering bands ;
From friend or foe with fire and sword
He forced subsistence for his horde.

In league with Tilly, but alone,
The war he meant to carry on,

He never would superior own.
And if he join'd his new raised force
With Tilly's, he had there no source
Of revenue to feed his power ;
His might would dwindle from the hour
That he should ask the League for aid :
Far deeper he his plans had laid,—
His power he, himself, would wield
And in his own way take the field ;
Would even risk the Kaiser's blame,
Far rather than his rising name
Should be eclipsed by Tilly's fame.
Secure in camp where here he stood
He held command of Elbe's vast flood,
His plunderers here could lay their hands
Upon the wealth of fertile lands ;
And forage to his camp and corn
Upon the Elbe was easy borne :
While for himself he need not fear,
He ever threaten'd Denmark's rear.

Beleaguer'd thus on left and right
King Christian was in awkward plight,
So he again equipp'd for fight
The veteran Mansfeld, who alone
Gave Friedland work to hold his own.
For not content the road to bar,
Eager as ever for the war,
To take the field he did not fear,
And soon to Dessau Bridge drew near,
Entrench'd his troops within the sight
Of Friedland's camp, and offer'd fight.
Although the battle Mansfeld lost
Which there upon the Duke he forced,
He, quickly rallying, swiftly coursed

With marvellous rapidity,
Silesia through to Hungary,
With Bethlen Gabor to combine,
Escaping thus from Wallenstein.

Greatly alarm'd the Kaiser saw
That Mansfeld threaten'd now the war
Ev'n into Austria to carry,
And order'd Friedland not to tarry,
 But march at once with utmost speed
 Upon his track, and nought to heed
 But his and Austria's pressing need.

The King of Denmark was repaid
By this diversion Mansfeld made
For all his outlay. It was clear,
That since he had secured his rear,
Tilly could not alone oppose
The united war that now arose ;
Brunswick and Hesse once combined
More than its match the League would find.
 But versed in battle-chance's laws,
 A thorough soldier, in these wars
 Tilly too oft had desperate cause
Retrieved to hesitate, he fell,
Handling his troops throughout so well,
Back from the Weser, that his force
Could sorely harass Denmark's course,
Should he attempt to make his way
Into the heart of Germany.

Christian, the King of Denmark, thought
He saw the opening that he sought ;
 That Tilly now was forced to stand
 At bay upon the Hessian land ;

And march'd with part of his command :
Defenceless lands before him lay,
No Catholic army barr'd his way ;
At last he now would gain the fame
For which he forth from Denmark came.

But Tilly was of different mind ;
For leaving garrisons behind,
The Hessian lands to hold in awe,
He march'd his troops, inured to war,
 Much faster than the Danish force ;
 And concentrating without loss
 Upon his hurried onward course
The Imperial troops, which Friedland's haste
Had left behind, when round he faced
To follow Mansfeld's desperate raid,
He press'd the King, who more afraid
Than ever with inferior might
The Catholic General now to fight,
Retraced his march, but all in vain
Safety in Brunswick yet to gain ;
 But Tilly hung upon the rear,
 Pursued him still, until in fear
 Of his manœuvres, Lutter near,
King Christian turn'd at bay, and sought,
Since now a battle must be fought,
With headlong courage to oppose
The veteran regiments of his foes.
Bravely he fought, but Tilly's skill
And greater numbers press'd him still,
And told at length ; wearied, and spent,
In narrowing circle ever pent,
 Their efforts useless, then at last
 The Danes saw hope of victory past :
 In vain the King charged furious, fast

In vain his horsemen bravely led,
In vain his nobles round him bled ;
Hopeless and lost appear'd the day,
Even pursuit he could not stay :
Some sixty flags, the baggage all,
The cannon, to the conqueror fall,
And Denmark's pride is forced to yield ;
Four thousand dead bestrew the field.

Meanwhile Count Mansfeld had attain'd
The hills where Bethlen Gabor reign'd ;
But met reception that had pain'd
Him sore. For Gabor had been told
That Danish power and English gold
Would make diversion in the north,
While he himself should sally forth
Upon the helpless Austrian lands,
And with their wealth enrich his bands.
No English gold had Mansfeld brought,
But, on the other hand, he sought
Money from Gabor, and he drew
Down on his country Friedland too.
Not long thought Gabor what to do :
Short time in consultation spent,
To Austria messengers he sent
To make his peace as best he might,
He meant to raid, but not to fight ;
To Mansfeld gave his best advice
To sell his guns at any price,
Disband his men, and, ere too late,
Seek safety in a neutral State.

Such counsel gave brave Mansfeld pain,
But there was nothing more to gain
From Gabor, so he could not fain

But take it, and forthwith he sought
With gold his scant equipments brought,
Join'd by a small and faithful band,
To reach the sea at Venice' strand.

But seized with sickness on the way,
His leech at last was forced to say
He could not now live many hours ;
Then Mansfeld rallied all his powers,
And to his sorrowing followers said :
"A life adventurous I have led,
Let me not, trusted friends, in bed
Like craven lie. Oft, in my race,
I 've met before Death face to face :
'Tis well nigh run,—I would not yield,—
Equip me now as for the field !
And let me grasp my sword once more,
That sword, which all my life I bore
In battle van, gird on my thigh,—
Support me, I would standing die !"
Thus the great soldier pass'd away,—
Death Brunswick claim'd before his prey,—
Both left their mark upon their day.

Of their two leaders now bereft,
Powerless the Protestants were left ;
Tilly in check they could not hold,
The Danish arms were backward roll'd :
The foe no longer could they face,
Christian surrender'd place by place,
Until, ere long, his own defeat
On German soil was all complete.

And then, with horror, too, he learn'd
That Friedland also was return'd,
All overtures of peace were spurn'd ;

For entering from the other side
Into his lands, in raging tide
Of wrathful conquest, Wallenstein
Pour'd o'er the Danish frontier line,
Burning some laurels yet to gain,
Chagrin'd to find the whole campaign
Was nearly ended, while in chase
Of Mansfeld he was forced to race ;
 Back to his islands drove the King,
 And in his headlong wrath did fling
 (Though too ridiculous the thing)
Red hot balls in the sea in rage,—
Such acts abound on History's page,—
And Wallenstein was anger'd sore
At such an ending to the war,
To think his prey he must forsake,
The King whom he had thought to take
To crown his triumph, and to swell
With ransom rich his purse as well.

There now remain'd to the sword
Nought more to do ; his savage horde
Of fierce adventurers he pour'd
All over fertile Mecklenburg,
And further into Brandenburg :
The Lutheran North he overran,
And in dread earnest thus began
The black and terrible career
That made his name a standing fear :
Throughout all time will Germans heap
Upon his memory curses deep.

From Mansfeld he had learn'd his part
How war to wage within the heart
Of hostile country—but the art

His might in peace to rear was new,
And Wallenstein must have his due ;
'Tis even to the devil given.—
All through his life had Mansfeld striven
From the rich towns to wring support
For soldiers who their battles fought.
What Mansfeld did by sudden raid
Friedland a perfect system made :
 A robber, in the Kaiser's name
 Empower'd to plunder, forth he came,
 And no authority dared blame
The lord of thousands, who could show
The Imperial warrant to the foe.
Unhappy were indeed the lands
On which he quarter'd his vile bands ;
With friend and foe alike they speed,
All must contribute to their need,
Their wants supply at any cost,
No matter what thereby they lost.

 To Court the plunder'd burghers went,
 But Wallenstein before them sent
 Vast sums, which he with judgment spent,
To stop the Austrian Councillors' ears ;
The Kaiser therefore nothing hears,
Or, if he hears, 'tis rebels' plaint
Who seek his General to attain.
When even Catholic distress,
The League's and Tilly's grumbings, press,
The Council calls it jealous fear
Of Austria's might, and gives no ear :
 And ever more does Wallenstein
 Force contributions still and fine,
 And ever sets more troops in line :
Still from the towns more gold he takes,

His power he ever greater makès,
And still, as loud he beats the drum,
To share his spoils more ruffians come.

At last, although there was no foe
To conquer, and the country's woe
Shriek'd loud to Heaven, the Austrian force
Number'd, on counting foot and horse,
Full eight score thousand armèd men :
Had Friedland chose, a stroke of pen
Of colonels and of captains then
Regiments of officers had made,
So many such he always paid ;
And such the mighty sums he raised
From German lands, that 'twas appraised,
In this his seven years' first command
Hundreds of millions came to hand :
Vast was the treasure he received
If chronicles can be believed.

He held, himself, a monarch's state,
And lavish'd gold at royal rate
On those who pleased him ; quick the fate
Of him who fail'd to do off-hand
Whate'er his humour might command.
" Let the beast hang ! " was all he said,
And with short shrift he soon was sped.
While he would be obey'd outright,
The discipline in camp was slight,
And he allow'd his raiding bands
To ravage and to waste the lands,
To give the reins to savage lust,
To level homesteads in the dust,
Proclaiming martial law, unjust.
If peasant, bolder than the rest,
Dared against outrage to protest,

They scrupled not to take his life,
To turn his children and his wife
Naked and homeless out at night
To live or die, as best they might.
Both friends and foes were served the same,
And all, too, in the Kaiser's name.

Savage and wild was Friedland's mien,
Fiery his glance, eyes small but keen,
In figure he was tall and lean ;
Suspicious, secret, never still,
Dark were his looks, of iron will,
Brave e'en to rashness, in his star
Confiding, fairly versed in war,
His talents never fully tried,
Haughty in overweening pride ;
Human one scarcely could him call,
Who loved by none was fear'd by all.
In dress he made a strange display,
His the buff jerkin of the day,
But all the rest of his array
Was scarlet, sash and cloak and hose ;
Above his close-cropp'd head there rose,
Adorn'd with scarlet drooping feather,
A tall round hat, boots of brown leather
Came more than half way up his thighs :
Stalking the ranks, his piercing eyes
Spied out at once the least mischance,
And regiments cower'd beneath his glance.

The Councillors who took his pay
To higher honours smoothed the way :
Friedland, they now began to say,
Deserved much at the Kaiser's hand ;
The service render'd Ferdinand

Could scarce repay at fitting rate,
But might him "Mecklenburg" create,—
The duchy he had overrun :
It was debated, and was done ;
But some among the Council thought
The Austrian victories were bought
At price too high,—in secret fear'd,
When he secure his power had rear'd,
Friedland might next his Kaiser beard,
And seek a kingdom of his own,
Or covet the Imperial throne :
The sequel show'd that they were right,—
A throne he ever kept in sight.

For Wallenstein of this was sure,
Could he but plant himself secure
Upon the North or Baltic sea,
Then would he independent be ;
Could then assert himself with ease,
His armies evermore increase,
All semblance of allegiance cease ;
Could dare at sovereignty to aim,
And royal title boldly claim.—
He wanted Stralsund, it before
Had paid exactions in this war,
Now it must yield to hostile fate,
And open wide at last its gate,
Admit his troops, and own his sway,
For his ambition pave the way,
Help him to found a kingdom there
In northern Europe, to prepare
His sovereign power. 'Twas still his care
The Kaiser's interests to feign,
Austrian consent thereby to gain :—
"For if he overrides the laws,

'Tis ever in the Kaiser's cause ;
He tramples custom under foot,
But only that the Austrian root
May strike still deeper in the land,
From Northern sea to Southern strand.

 " When German liberties are crush'd,
 And Freedom's voice to silence hush'd,
 When Anarchy its dam has rush'd
And overwhelm'd the ancient bounds,
All check which now the throne surrounds
And hems in the Imperial power,
Will vanish likewise from that hour :
No longer constitutional sway
Need Kaiser wield ; then Austria's day
Will brilliant dawn, and every land
Will own her power and feel her hand."

 Thus argue ever Friedland's tools,
 Thus Ferdinand he still befools,
 And through his creatures thus he rules
The Imperial Council. Still no use
Is Maximilian's abuse,
Still Tilly's bodings gain no ear ;
For Ferdinand stands half in fear,
Half dazzled by the prospects bright
That Friedland ever holds in sight.
Rome and the Jesuits are content
To fully humour his proud bent,
 Hoping through the Imperial might
 To quench for ever Truth's clear light
 That Luther kindled, and in night,—
To plunge the nations back again,
That they may freedom ne'er attain,—
In deepest night of superstition ;
To found anew the Inquisition ;

And all throughout the German land
To light the torch, and fire the brand.
The stake, the torture, and the rack
Shall turn the page of History back
To darkest hour, and once more bind
In Ignorance the human mind,
In Priestcraft's fetters all mankind!

So all their various schemes pursue :
Jesuits and Kaiser, Friedland too,
Combine the Lutheran Faith to crush ;
Upon the common foe they rush,—
For all are tyrants,—Liberty
By all is hated equally!

One only Lutheran power remains,
All Germany is now in chains ;
Across the sea the feeble moan
Of dying Liberty is thrown
To Sweden, who, it seems, alone
Can succour.—England might, 'tis true,
But dark days dawn in England too,
Where an infatuated King
His people does defiance fling,
Thinking to rule by Right Divine,
And in himself alone combine
Kingly and Parliamentary power.
Already the black storm-cloud's lower
Hung o'er the country ; when it burst
High raged the Civil Brand accurst,
And England suffer'd miseries first,
Forgetful of all other war,
Years of distress,—and Europe saw
Her liberties by Despot hemm'd ;
Her King a prisoner, tried, condemn'd,

Ev'n put to death; her hard-won Right
Subjected to the Tyrant's might
Ere she regain'd, in happy hour,
Entirely constitutional power,
Peace, and content. Ev'n then Rome sought
To wreck what Reformation wrought
Throughout two reigns.—Dearly we bought
Our liberties: our fathers' blood
Was pour'd forth then in purple flood;
On many a hard-fought field they died,
Righteous their aims on either side:
His lands and life the Cavalier
Staked freely, for he had no fear
That Right would not at last prevail,
When England would with rapture hail
Her Kings again. The Puritan
For Freedom and the Rights of Man
Stood like a rock, and never ran,
But rather fell upon the field,
Scorning, whate'er the odds, to yield.
Both in the wrong, they both were right!
Never again in Civil Fight
May we, their children, thus oppose
Ourselves.—We, against England's foes
Will freely draw the sword, if need
Demands, nor will we statesmen heed
Who say the age of war is past.
Would that it were! But can peace last
While intrigues follow intrigues fast,
And sap in secret? Standing by
Could we look on while Liberty
Were trampled under Despot's heel?
Should we then no compunction feel?
Then would I say that England's might
Were hollow, empty sound,—no right

Would she have more her voice to raise
To hymn again Fair Freedom's praise.
Our fathers won undying fame,
And left us an immortal name!
If such proud parentage we claim
A banded world we must not fear,
Our path of duty seeing clear;
With force of arms we must oppose,
Like them, Religion's,—Freedom's, foes.

Heaven to the Anglo-Saxon race
Gave not such power, nor such proud place
Upon the earth, that it should spend
Its energy on sordid end,
Mere wealth of gold alone to get.
The rich by pitfalls are beset;
Than gold no surer doth rust fret!
Pleasure, and Luxury, and Ease,
And all their kindred vices please;
But they corrupt the nation's heart,
Religion, Freedom, must depart
When once they gain a lasting hold!
Let us then clasp, and tightly fold
Our fathers' virtues to our breast—
Since some for Church and King, the rest
For Puritan Republic fought,
And neither gain'd the end they sought,
But misery on England brought,
May we a lesson learn :—The life
That England wasted in this strife,
Had it been spent in nobler cause,
Had surely given equal laws,
Religious freedom to the world,—
Had surely tyrants headlong hurl'd;
Then Anarchy were ever fled,
Nor could Rebellion rear its head!

For who can say what had been seen
Had England's Charles a hero been,
Another of Gustavus' mien
And calibre?—If in two years
Gustavus dried up Europe's tears,
And won for all the northern lands
Religion, freedom from Rome's bands,
Men thought much more would e'en betide
Should England stand by Sweden's side,
Led on by such a glorious King,
Who sought no power, nor gain to bring
His dynasty, himself content
To accept the mission Heaven sent,
Brethren to succour humbly went.
The world two centuries and more
Of longing had been spared, and War
Perhaps were even now unknown ;
And Priestcraft, Tyranny, had flown
Back to the Hell from whence they came,
And Europe were not now the same!
Her destinies the Huguenot
Had shaped so differently, I trow ;
That never Revolution force
Had gather'd on its riot course,
To all the world a fertile source
Of half the misery we mourn
For ages that are yet unborn.
Ah ! who can say ?—The Papal power
Perchance had blossom'd into flower
Of Christ-like hue,—in love each sect
Had learn'd its fellow to respect,
No feuds would more the nations part
Rivals in trade alone, and art.

Alas ! it is an idle theme,

Nought but a poet's changing dream,—
And yet it is of Heaven a gleam !

One Hero only has there been,—
The whole world's history has seen
But one king, conqueror, or lord
Of armies, who avenger's sword
In victory did not abuse,
Whose life no good man ever rues.
That Hero, Gustave, stands alone,
No country has his equal shown !
How then could I expect to find
Two kings of such exalted mind,
In such a holy cause combined,
At one and selfsame time? The page
Of History cannot point to age,—
All records search, examples bring,—
That e'er produced such peerless King.
'Tis vain! for each in turn must fade
Compared with him,—Heaven glorious made
His conquering arms. Such might ill-used,
Such opportunities abused,
Had made him tyrant like them all,
And he had then deserved their fall,
And justly, too, would Freedom call
Him, like the rest, accurst; his fame
Had perish'd with the Despot's name,
His memory would the nations hate,—
But different far shall be his fate !

In him shall kings example see,
Pattern and model shall he be
Of royal virtues for all time :
Each infant prince in every clime
Shall early lisp the Hero's name,

And pray "O Lord! let me, too, claim
Some part in Great Gustavus' fame,
A share in his grand work begun;
That when my course on earth is run
My people may with sorrow hear
That their good King is gone,—the tear
May too for me unbidden flow,
True token of the country's woe."
When such times come, then misery
From an enfranchised world shall fly;
And nations, that in darkness groan,
In Priestcraft's fetters writhe and moan
For liberty, shall then see blown
Aside the black and awful pall
That threatens to envelope all
Who now would kindle Truth's clear light,
And banish Rome's and Error's night.

History shall show how hard he strove
To soften War by Christian Love,
How he amidst the nations' rage
Lived centuries before his age;
E'en children shall his deeds relate,
His virtues strive to emulate,
And him Ideal King create.

But let us to our tale return:
We saw how Wallenstein did burn
Of Stralsund mastery now to gain,
And thus command the Baltic main,
Denmark and Sweden hold in awe,
And, as he chose, prolong the war,
Until he could his banner fly,
His Kaiser openly defy.
Boldly determined to defend

Their city to the bitter end,
As last resource, the burghers send
To Wallenstein the Council down,
As deputation from the town—
For he may even yet relent.
To Prague the Council therefore went,
Where Wallenstein just then held court
With regal pomp, and audience sought.
“Ha! bring ye now your hoarded gold,”—
The Tyrant’s voice in thunder roll’d,—
“And Stralsund’s keys?” “Gold bring we none,
With such exactions we have done—
O’er-burthened by the former one,”
Answer’d the Burgomaster there.
“Then shall ye find indifferent fare
When ye my garrison receive.
The keys surrender!” Scarce believe
Could Friedland his own ears: they say,—
‘We will not, nor thy levies pay.’
“What, stubborn brutes! we soon will see:
I’ll force ye!”—“Nay, no brutes are *we*,”
They answer, as they turn to go.
“Rivers of blood for this shall flow,”
With rage he screams, “The wind ye sow,—
The whirlwind reap; for, by my sword,
Obey’d outright shall be my word!
My guns shall close this argument.
Think not that I will e’er relent:
A hundred thousand men I’ll lose,—
Ay, mine own life,—ere I will choose,
When once my mind is fix’d, to yield:
Your insolence no walls shall shield!”

The deputation hurried forth
In dread of Friedland’s menaced wrath;

And while his colleagues journey'd north,
To Court the Burgomaster went
Their desperate state to represent.
His pleadings moved, and Ferdinand
Himself wrote an express command,
For him to bear, that Wallenstein
Should not the town besiege, nor fine.—
Breaking the seals, with flashing eyes,
The Tyrant storm'd,—“ If, to the skies
Were bound, with chains of iron, thy town,
From Heaven itself I'd tear it down
And teach it how to scorn my frown !”

Bravely does Stralsund now prepare
To meet the storm, to Denmark's care
Entrusts the fortress, and the King
Visits in person troops to bring.
The Danish succour heart inspires ;
Fresh courage Patriotism fires ;
New batteries the burghers rear,
Await the tempest without fear.

Friedland, believing in his star,
Successful in his course thus far,
Dispensed with common rules of war,
And order'd in his wrathful pride,
To assault at once the landward side,
And carry there the walls by storm.
He met at once reception warm,
And was repulsed with heavy loss :
The town could not be won by force.
This had a careful general known,
No skill can such a fault atone.

After experience dearly bought,
To starve the place next Friedland sought,
And did at last what there he ought

First to have done,—he tried blockade,
And call'd in Poland's King to aid :—
Though Admiral of the Baltic sea,
No naval power at all had he,
At this or any time before,—
By land alone had he waged war ;
So Sigismund must send his fleet,
To make the investment all complete.

But Poland's fleet in one sharp fight
The Danish navy sunk outright,
For scarce a ship escaped by flight :
The harbour thus again was free,
The city open to the sea.
Then Friedland swore, in wrathful mood,
Men should not know where Stralsund stood ;
He'd leave it but a smoking mound,—
Would raze its bulwarks to the ground,—
Would burn with fire its houses down,—
And storm at any cost the town.

His boast was vain, the assault was foil'd ;
From Stralsund's walls his troops recoil'd,
And Friedland felt his fame was soil'd.
The burghers fresh defences rear,
His savage menace do not fear,
But watch upon the walls in turn,
And all his offers proudly spurn ;
For now a different course he takes,
Rich bribes and promises he makes,
But Stralsund feels herself secure—
The sea provisions will ensure.

So next by night alarms he seeks
To wear the burghers out, for weeks
Incessantly bombards, till reeks
The very air with sulphurous smoke ;

This proves a more successful stroke :
The Danish soldiers waste away
In ceaseless skirmish day by day ;
And fortune turns, for now his star
Again ascendant shines afar.
Once more he does his regiments form,
Once more prepares the walls to storm.

But once again his star misleads,
Seni again ambition feeds,—
Both in the end prove broken reeds.

For Gustave keeps a watchful eye
On Stralsund, and the burghers fly
To him for aid, since Denmark's King
No more can reinforcements bring ;
The soldiers left him are too few
To guard his isles and Stralsund too.
Christian and Gustave now agree
The Danish fleet shall keep the sea,
While Sweden shall to Stralsund send
Succours which may the town defend,
And hold it till the war shall end,
Safeguarded from all Friedland's force ;
For Gustave deems that Stralsund's loss
Would be a blow to Freedom sore ;
And though he much needs troops to war
With Poland's King, who claims his crown,
Stralsund is an important town,
Bulwark to Lutheran Liberty,
Commanding, as it does, the sea.
For were it once in Friedland's hands,
And subject thus to his commands,
'Twould menace all the northern lands ;
And, turn'd into a place of arms,

Would threaten with War's dread alarms
Sweden and Denmark, all the North,
With Rome's, and with the Jesuits' wrath.
And so for Faith and Liberty,
Ev'n to the last extremity,—
To its last stone,—Gustavus told
His Commandant the town to hold.

“Sooner than Stralsund now should fall
I would command, myself, and call
Upon my faithful subjects all
To fight in such a righteous fray;
For it would be the darkest day
For Sweden, when upon the coast
A Catholic invading host
Held such impregnable strong place;
The danger we in time must face:
And thou must Stralsund's walls defend,
Due reinforcements I will send,
And come myself, if need shall be:
Not that I fear at all for thee,—
A fortress open to the sea,
Well mann'd, can not be won by force;
And Friedland yet will rue his course!”
Thus spake the King, as forth he sent
His General with the armament.
Fain would he now himself conclude
In peace, if possible, the feud
'Twixt him and Poland: by French aid
At last a six-years' truce was made,
By which Gustavus kept his own;
Poland, by Austria left alone,
Renounced his claim to Sweden's throne.

Friedland could not succeed before,
But smaller hope of conquest saw

When Swedish Captain, skill'd in fight,
The fortress held with veteran might ;
And now that several months had pass'd
Since he his lines round Stralsund cast,
The country, long ago drain'd dry,
Could not his armies' wants supply.

While plenty reign'd within the gates,
Besiegers were sore put to straits :
Disease and Famine, awful mates !
Stalk through the camp, his soldiers lie
By fever stricken, thousands die :
He sees he cannot there remain
In camp much longer, and would fain,
Had he not gone so far, withdraw
His forces from this doubtful war :
But Stralsund's sack, her burghers' gold,
His men will to his standards hold !

Success alone could justify
His disobedience. To rely
Upon his troops, and to defy
His sovereign, Friedland dared not yet :
To his ambition bounds were set.
All eyes were cast on Stralsund's fate ;
Europe his generalship would rate
His rival Tilly's far below,
Should he retreat before the foe :
The place must fall at any cost,
No matter what the life he lost :
Could he but tire the soldiers out,
The burghers then, beyond a doubt,
He easily could put to rout.

Thus days and weeks are slowly pass'd,
And still his fierce bombardments last,

Until he finds the weakest spot
In Stralsund's walls to pour his shot ;
Then concentrating all his guns,
Still closer, every night, he runs
Up to the town his batteries :
'Tis plain to make a breach he tries.—
And now the attack is thus laid bare
The Commandant does prompt prepare
His countermove with watchful care.
He summons to the great Townhall
To council-of-war his captains all,
Invites the Council to attend,
Shows how he will the town defend :
"The burghers still the walls must line ;
With powder we ourselves will mine
The batter'd part, and every day
New ramparts rear, to stretch away
Within the town ; and, night by night,
Pile up a sand-bag barrier slight
Within the breach, to stop the flight
Of any hostile cannon balls
That may, perchance, pass through the walls,
On time sufficient we may count,
The breach will not be fit to mount
For several days, I feel full sure,
And we can work till then secure.
We have at least some three days' grace,
And I will call within that space
Another, final council here,
Which ye shall all attend : no fear
But that the foe will pay right dear,
Whene'er they venture the assault !"
The General ended ; through the vault
The shouts re-echoing loudly rung
Applause and praise from every tongue.

All hurry forth, without delay,
To start the work that very day :
The centre of the breach is mined,
And there no laggard can one find.
 Soon from the mine two hundred pace,
 New breastworks on each side they trace,
 Enclosing a three-corner'd space.
Ere many hours the work is done;
Back from the walls the ramparts run,
The ditch they dig, their sacks they fill,
Toiling, in thousands, with a will.
By dark the lines are raised breast high,
No man in bed that night may lie ;
All work and rest in short relays,
Some pile the sacks, some houses raze
 That stand within the enclosed triangle ;
 Some lay down ropes and wires to entangle,
 While others drive down stakes to mangle,
With sharpen'd points, the stormers' feet :
Thus daybreak sees the work complete.
All Stralsund to the harbour runs,
From every ship they take the guns,
And drag them quickly through the street,
The Commandant denudes the fleet
Both of its guns and sailors too ;
For trusty men, full well he knew,
 And marksmen train'd, he should require,
 Whose brawny arms would never tire,
 Grapeshot and canister to fire.

The harbour he's content to leave,—
Its forts could hostile ships receive,
If such there were, but we have seen
That Poland's fleet destroy'd had been.
The battery is placed that night,

At dawn imposing is the sight,
Once seen, not easily forgot,—
Barrels of powder, piles of shot,
Two rows of guns, a hundred each,
Extend as far as eye can reach,
And every one commands the breach,
And o'er the space enclosed will sweep,
An awful harvest there to reap.—
In little knots the sailors stand,
Each six or seven in command
Of their own captain of the gun,
Their piled arms flashing in the sun,—
The burnish'd steel reflects his light,—
A grand, but still a fearful sight!

With that third morning's early dawn
Report upon report is borne
Upon the breeze, and all that morn
The thunders, that for days had roll'd,
In volume are increased tenfold.
For Friedland now had brought up too
All his artillery, and threw,
His fire concentrating on that spot,
The whole day long, shot after shot;—
And as they strike the crumbling wall
At intervals, with ponderous fall,
Huge fragments of the ramparts crash
Down in the ditch; the lightnings flash
Incessantly, all day the clash
Of war is heard, the heavy sound
Of wagons rumbling o'er the ground.
In Stralsund all the casements shake,
The earth itself appears to quake;
The ships moor'd in the harbour rock:—
Alarm'd the women anxious flock

Into the market-place, and cry,—
“Fierce Friedland comes—the foe is nigh!”

“Not so!” the Commandant replies,
And then to calm them vainly tries.
A sea of faces, tear-stain’d eyes
He sees: “Go home in peace to-day,
My good wives all!” they hear him say—
“To-day ye need not fear the foe—
To-morrow, please God, him we’ll show
The way back to his camp again!
Your loving hearts ye need not pain—
Nor for your husbands’ welfare grieve,
That in my hands in safety leave:

Behind the walls secure they’ll fight—
Compared with ours their work is light.
I dare not trust them Friedland’s might
In open country to oppose,
For well-tried warriors are our foes,—
On them must Sweden’s veterans fall!”
He said, and enter’d then the hall:
“Tell ye the citizens to rest,”
He there the burgher chiefs address’d,—
“To sleep to-day, and all night too,
To-morrow brings us work to do!

The watch alone shall keep the guard:
Let all array in every ward
With matchlock arm’d, and pike, and sword,
At first alarm for storm prepare,
And haste to muster in the square!”

The General’s work is nearly done,
Each post is visited, each gun
Is train’d and laid, and charged with grape;
And now the breach is changed in shape:

For batter'd into dusty mound,
The wall is levell'd to the ground;
The ditch itself is half choked up.
Then the brave Swedes and sailors sup,
And pass from man to man the cup.
Thus the sun sets, and all the night
The hostile shot loud whiz their flight,
Through the long hours from Stralsund's walls,
From time to time, the echo falls,
As sullenly reply the guns,
And stones and rubble fall by tons.
As the day breaks the batteries pitch
Faster their shot across the ditch,
Faster and faster Friedland's balls
Hail on the stubborn town's stone walls,
Faster the answering echo falls:
No more the foe their purpose hide,—
Forming their ranks on every side,
Without the camp they take their stand,
Friedland himself in chief command.

At once from all the towers clash
The loud alarm-bells; horsemen dash
In wild career about the town;
While from each house arm'd men run down
In every garb, a motley throng;
Their numbers, as they pass along,
Swell fast:—the clanging dong, dong, dong,—
The tread of many men—the shout
Of many voices—seem to flout
All discipline, but 'tis not so;
Though hurried is the living flow,
It centres to the market square;
The burghers promptly muster there:
And there the various bands unite,

All eager for the coming fight.
Each breast with martial ardour swells,—
Throughout the city cease the bells,—
Of thousands they have toll'd the knells!
The muster rolls the captains call,
And lead off to the city wall:
In briefest space the market square,
Just now so throng'd with men, is bare,
And silence reigns within the town.
But on the walls the cannon frown,
And promptly answer to the roar
Of Friedland's batteries, that pour
Upon the battlements, which reach
With musket fire the half-choked ditch,
An iron storm, as on the breach
Advance, in open line, the foe,—
Fully a thousand men, I trow!

Each bears a faggot on his head—
As they approach a few are sped,
And lifeless drop, but most succeed;
Their faggots these throw in with speed,
And soon the half-choked ditch they fill,
While all the Austrian batteries still
Keep up a fire that does not fail
Upon the walls,—an iron hail,
That makes the stoutest warrior quail.
The gunners cannot serve a gun,
But crouch for shelter, one by one;
Silenced the cannon on the wall,
The musketeers soon vanish all:—
And now a column Friedland forms,
And in upon the breach he storms.
From Austria's ranks a ringing cheer
The crouching Swedish soldiers hear,—

The thunders cease, and now the roar
Of battle dies away,—before
It swells anew they quickly draw
The cannon back, and turn them round,
And load with grape,—upon the ground
Enclosed within the breastworks' aim,—
Each musketeer upon the same
Levels his piece, and now again
The Austrian guns their iron rain,
And each report is heard no more,
Lost in the unceasing thunder-roar.

'Tis one infernal, hellish din ;
And, see, the column rushes in
Over the ditch, the breach they win,
And into the enclosure crowd,
Cheering at first, then yelling loud,
As from the breastwork and the walls
A murderous fire of small arms falls :
They drop by hundreds, o'er the dead,
Thick piled in heaps, their fellows tread ;
Fast as they fall appear more foes,
As still their gaps the Austrians close.

The rear ranks push the front ranks on,
To them it seems the place is won,
They think the sack is now begun.
Counting upon the town's rich spoil
Onward they press, in wild turmoil ;
But from the walls the grape-shot rains,—
They make no way with all their pains,
But where they stand melt fast away.
The Swedish muskets hold at bay,
The work defies all Friedland's might ;
Thick smoke obscures the awful fight ;
The trench becomes an Austrian grave,
And nothing now the foe can save.

The Commandant the signal gave
That doom'd all who had pass'd the breach.
See! flashing flames to Heaven reach,
And light up all the battle round
For one short moment,—then the ground
Is torn, is into fragments rent,
And showers of stone and earth are sent
Up to the sky.—The mine is sprung,—
Into the air are hundreds flung.

As thick and grey the stifling cloud
Spreads over all its murky shroud,
And hides that struggling, surging crowd,
A moment both sides stand appall'd ;
But not for long, the Austrians, wall'd
With muskets round, make for the breach,
And headlong fly their camp to reach.
But few escaped the tale to tell,—
Beneath the murderous fire they fell ;
Three thousand men their onslaught cost,
While scarce a soldier Sweden lost.

The townsmen, too, gain great renown,
For everywhere the foe storm down
In numerous columns on the town :
On every side the ditch they cross,
With ladders scale the walls in force :
The battlements are wreathed in smoke,
The burghers deal out lusty stroke
With axe and halbert on the head
Of those that mount, pour molten lead
And flaming pitch on those below,
And everywhere repulse the foe.
But Friedland rallies his array,
And, striving to retrieve the day,
This time in person leads the way.

Fresh troops within the breach are sent,—
Fresh faggots stop again the rent
Caused by the mine,—once more they fill
The space enclosed, and press on still,—
Up to the work itself they dash,
For slowly now the muskets flash :
The Swedes have nobly done their task,
No need this time the guns to mask.
“Fire, sailors!” loud the General cries,—
A thundering salvo rends the skies,
From every gun the lightning flies ;
A storm of iron tears the ground,
And shrieks and curses deep resound,
And oaths and imprecations dread,—
Where living mingle with the dead,
In ghastly heaps, in pools of gore.
Even veterans brave, grown grey in war,
Whom nothing now should e’er affright,
Turn sick, and shudder at the sight.
Though they in hundred fields had been,
They ne’er such slaughter saw, I ween,—
Nor witness’d such an awful scene !

But on this day his fame depends,—
To all his regiments Friedland sends
For volunteers, once more to mount
The breach, nor does he vainly count.
Old soldiers still around him flock,
And those who had not felt the shock
Of that dread storm within the breach.
One thousand gulden promised each,
Above his share in Stralsund’s spoil,
Tempts them to undergo the toil,
And yield their lives, or Sweden foil,
Forward they bravely rush ; but now

As they approach, the cannon plough
Into the advancing column's head ;
On both sides of the breach they spread
To gain the shelter of the wall,
But ever as they charge they fall,—
Before that fire like grass cut down,
As soon as e'er the breach they crown.

And see! the Swedes at last appear,
In sortie threatening now their rear.
Ev'n to the bravest it is clear
The day is lost ;—they break, and run ;
The Swedes pursue ;—the setting sun
Sees Friedland's force in full retreat,
And Stralsund's victory all complete.

The Swedes, exhausted by the fight,
Care not to follow up their flight.
The daylight fades, the night comes on,—
Content with victory bravely won,
Back to the town their course they wend,
No longer need they it defend.

The burghers sally out and spend
In joyous task the hours till night :—
They spike the guns, and take delight
In tearing down the batteries,
To save which Friedland never tries ;
But on the morrow marches forth
To Mecklenburg, in foaming wrath,
His famine-stricken ranks to feed
In districts where they'll better speed,
Where they can hope for ampler fare,
Where he fresh ventures may prepare,—
And gladly we will leave him there !



BOOK II.

The Vintage at Traubeneck.

"DREAMILY floats on the broad blue Rhine,
Our skiff in the sunlit ray:
Come, tell me thy thoughts, thou sweetheart mine,
Open and free as the day.

"I think, as we float so calmly down,
Borne up on the river's breast,
Past lordly castle and nestling town,
That I as secure shall rest.

"And pass shall my time as free from care.
Serene as the river's course;
With thee for my tower well shall I fare,
Nor dread any hostile force.

"Together we'll stem life's surging tide,
Sail over its rapids fast;
Nought will I fear with thine arm to guide,
Thy loving look on me cast!"

Thus sang the maiden in her girlish glee,
Her soul o'er-rippling in her loving song,
For to her heart's own love betrothed was she,
And she had known the youth her whole life long;

Nor thought that far across the waters thrown
Her voice had power to reach in silvery tone,
By distance mellow'd still, to other lovers' ears,
And start in soldier's eye, uncheck'd, unmanly tears.

Eric himself had not believed the tale,
Had he been told it but a while ago,
His lot through maiden's coyness he 'd bewail,
Responsive to a song his tear would flow ;
For he was bred in camp, and soldier born,
His fathers long before had laurels worn
In that grey time of old, when Scandinavia's pride
Claim'd, as her boundless realms, the stormy ocean wide ;

And sent her warriors forth to every strand
Kingdoms to conquer, or abroad to die :
And he himself had tried his maiden brand
And youthful mettle under Gustave's eye ;
And with a love surpassing woman's love
Adored his King, and ever sought to prove,
By doughty, daring deeds of venture in the field,
Death dealing wide, his right the Vikings' blade to wield.

Gustavus loved him,—could not bear to see
A youth, with only down upon his chin,
Risk his young life, when warriors grown did flee,
And where the bravest quail'd, rush reckless in.
The Hero-king, who did not fear to spend
His own life-blood, fear'd greatly for his friend.
Dearly one hard-fought day was Gustave's victory bought,
And Eric on that day had wonders boldly wrought.

The Swedish nobles fighting, freely bled,
And broken was opposing Poland's might ;
But Eric's eldest brother there lay dead,
And many more—so desperate was the fight :

That evening, when the battle's rage was done,
The outcome certain, and the victory won,
At last Gustavus for our youthful hero sent,
And, seating him beside him in the royal tent,—

With kindly tone the gracious Monarch spoke:
“Eric, my lad, I mourn thy brother's fall,—
Thy father's heart, methinks, with grief were broke
Were his fate thine.—To life I cannot call
The dead—the day of miracles is past!
In camp no longer must thou stay,—the last
Art thou of his three sons,—thou art the youngest born,—
Thou shalt then journey forth, ev'n with the morrow's dawn,

“To Holland, to thy father,—thence from Court
To Court, through Europe travel in his train:
Tell him how nobly his son Ulric fought,—
Tell him Gustavus feels a father's pain;
But tell him also that his King would die
Such death as Ulric's—would victorious lie,
The hero of the day, on such a glorious field:
For fame surpassing this the earth can never yield!”

“My Liege,” responded Eric, “do not send
Me from thy presence and the camp away:
Suffer me still thy person to attend,
And bear my part with thee in every fray.
My danger is not greater than is thine,—
Apart from thee my heart will surely pine!
For deeds adventurous my youthful soul does burn,
Let me thine errand speed, and then to thee return.”

“Nay, Eric,” said the King, “it must not be!
Thou art too daring, far too hot thy blood,—
The camp is not as yet the place for thee;
Travel shall moderate the impetuous flood

Of youthful spirit, juster value set
On human life, true estimate beget
Of knightly virtues:—he who fights alone for fame
The deathless laurel-crown can never, Eric, claim!

“I, as a King, must venture in this strife.
It is mine own!—for mine and Sweden’s right
I must expose my person, risk my life,
As freely as the meanest in the fight.
God is my Judge,—I seek not to oppose
Arms against arms. Peace with my Polish foes,
Although victorious now, most gladly would I make,
To fight for Luther’s Cause, Sweden, and Freedom’s sake.

“Against the Austrian Tyrant would I war,
Gladly would I the righteous cause uphold:
My brethren’s miseries grieve me full sore,—
In such a fight ev’n cravens would be bold!
Here, in this war, attain’st thou warrior’s fame,
It is not worthy of the Christian name!
They who are made by war, by war are oft unmade:
The fairest laurels gain’d by conquest quickly fade.

“Now to thy quarters haste thee, and prepare
To do my bidding with the morning light.
These packages entrust I to thy care,
And see that thou deliver them aright.
Nay, grieve not; ’tis because I love thee well
I send thee forth from me,—and now farewell!
The Lutheran war will soon recall thee to my sight,
Where thou with honour may’st for Faith and Freedom fight.”

A year had pass’d since then, and so it happ’d
That Eric wander’d by the glad Rhine’s tide,

Gloomy his mood—in meditation wrapt,
Although a playful girl tripp'd by his side.
It was a glorious morning late in spring,
The woods that fringed the water's edge did ring
With glad melodious song, the birds' sweet nesting notes
Trill'd forth in harmony from proudly swelling throats.

"Hilda," he said, "the very air is glad,
The waters ripple in the sun's warm ray:
'Tis hard that I alone should be so sad,
One word from thee—that word thou wilt not say—
Would turn my heaviness to bounding joy,
Would give me rapture free from all alloy;
Would cause my longing heart with dread delight to beat,
Would cast me vanquish'd down, a captive at thy feet.

"Thou knowest that I love thee with a love
Consuming, boundless, passing all control:—
Ne'er loved I woman yet, and I would prove
That I can love thee from mine inmost soul!
I know that thou dost love me,—thou hast shown,
A thousand times, the love thou wilt not own:
Thy brother's glad consent, thy father's, I believe,
Sweet Hilda, shouldst thou yield, thine Eric would receive.

"Why then withhold that word? Why turn away?
Why should a maiden's bashful coyness sever
Two loving hearts like ours? That word but say,
And I am thine, and thou art mine for ever!
Oh, Hilda, speak! 'Tis simply, easy said;
Ope but those lips—those lips so rosy red;
Let me with lover's kiss the holy compact seal,
Upon my heaving breast thy heart-beat joyous feel."

"Eric, I love thee!—There, the word has pass'd
My lips—I love thee with a sister's love:
Nay, wherefore now is glance reproachful cast?
No further me shall all thy pleadings move!
Wait till I'm grown—I do not know my heart!
'Twere better far that thou and I should part,
'Twere better far that I should seem thee to deride,
Than lightly yield to thee, a still unwilling bride."

"Wait till thou 'rt grown! A thousand years I'll wait,
Nor will I once in all that time complain!
But promise me that thou wilt be my mate.
No sister's love! Take back that word again—
Unless thou be my wife I will not wed!
Living, I'll ever love thee,—love thee, dead,—
If here on earth I may not claim thee for my bride,
Eternity I'll spend by mine own Hilda's side!"

While still he speaks, upon the broad Rhine's wave
In peaceful voyage sails the little skiff:
The morning is so calm, the waters lave,
In murmuring ripple, stirr'd by gentle whiff,
The pebbly beach—and now the shores along
The maiden's music, answering to the song
Of peasant lover, falls on their enraptured ears,—
Those silv'ry tones that raised in Eric's eyes the tears.

And so they listen, standing there entranced
By such a lovely scene and such sweet tones:
The leaping Rhine in sunlit wavelets danced,
And ever murmur'd still the ripple's moans.
While Eric looks on Hilda's blushing face,
And views with rapture there each heightening grace,
And joyful marks new light in Hilda's heaven-blue eyes,—
The man's deep voice again in loud refrain replies;

"Together we'll stem life's surging tide,
Sail over its rapids fast;
Nought will I fear with thine arm to guide,
Thy loving look on me cast!"

"Hilda," he says again, "it cannot be
That thou wilt really spurn me from thy side:
Yon maiden's song conveys reproof to thee,
Her simple trust thy sport doth surely chide.
Say but thou lov'st me, I will patient wait
Until thou reachest woman's full estate;
Nor will I e'er before ask thee to be my wife,
But live on love for thee, and hope—a dreary life!"

"Eric, I were not satisfied with part
Of thine affections—I should claim the whole!
Thou art a soldier,—thy King owns thy heart,
'Twixt thine and mine the stormy oceans roll.
The maiden's song show'd plain the maiden's mind,
In it no argument for thee I find:
The maiden trusts to gain on loving husband's breast
Shelter, where she, secure, may ever peaceful rest!

"But thou art restless and of changeful mood,
Wast bred in camp, and lov'st advent'rous deed,
Delight'st in war's alarms and tempest rude:
I fear lest thou shouldst prove a broken reed
Whereon to lean! To Sweden me wouldst take,
And my dear German home bid me forsake!
How could I hope to bear thy northern winter's cold,
E'en pillow'd on thy breast, e'en though thy arms enfold?"

"But thee the trumpet's blare would call away,
At its first blast thou wouldst gird on thy sword,

'Mid Sweden's icebound rocks how could I stay?
Thy brother Ulric's widow mourns her lord,—
His orphans listen for their father's tread,—
I too might have to mourn my husband dead!
Wouldst thou war's dreadful trade renounce, and here remain?
Perchance, I might—but ah! I see the hope is vain."

"Oh! Hilda," Eric cried, "how sad my fate!
Gustavus, whom I love—for whom I'd die,—
First me for reckless courage doth berate;
Next seek I favour in a maiden's eye,
The maiden whom I love—whom I adore,—
Alas! will not ev'n hear the name of war.
How can I arms renounce? Hilda, my fathers bold
Were warriors—Vikings—in the shadowy time of old.

"Why need I Sweden and my King forsake?
Thou art a woman, canst not understand!
Fear not that I should loveless husband make,
Fear not to trust to me thy willing hand!
Dearest among all women—be my wife!
I'll guard thee, precious, as I'd guard my life!
Nor fear because I love Gustave, my noble King,—
Hilda, a soldier's love is quite a different thing!

"I never loved but thee—and thou lov'st me:
I love my King, and thou shalt love him too!
No cause for jealous fear in that I see:—
Believe me, thou this day shalt never rue.
If I am headstrong—reckless—still I'm thine!
A type of manhood is thy noble Rhine,
Cradled in mountain ice, hemm'd in by Alpine snows,
Headlong its bounding course through every barrier flows.

"So ever must man's youth impetuous be :
'Tis but the o'erflowing of too generous blood !
'Tis like the rising sap within the tree
That later bursts forth into glorious flood
Of purple fruit.—In youth the Rhine gain'd force
To glide to ocean now in easy course.
Then, Hilda, fear no more for me a soldier's fate,
All obstacles I'll leap—and thou shalt be my mate !"

"Thou art too wilful ! I will not be woo'd,
Sir Swede, with such impetuous, desperate storm !
Thou layest siege with soldier's battery rude :—
A maiden's heart is won in gentler form !
Here comes my brother Rudolph, he will tell
That Rhineland maidens all love flattery well.
He says my father calls, and I must haste away,—
Too long I've stay'd with thee, I bid thee now, good-day !"

Her playful laughter mingled with the rill's,
That bubbled, too, its music as it sprung
In joyous stream from out the vine-clad hills,
The answering woods in echo softly rung,
She turn'd,—her feet scarce seem'd to touch the ground,
Her fairy form, uphill, with graceful bound,
Leapt from each rock-hewn step to step, in airy flight :
Ev'n Rudolph stopp'd to gaze on the bewitching sight.

But Eric stood enrapt, nor turn'd his eyes
Until she gain'd the wooded mountain crest
"What shall I do to win such heavenly prize ?"
He falter'd, as a sigh burst from his breast.
"I am a soldier rough, the cold North's child ;
She the warm Rhineland's growth, an angel mild ;
Can natures differing thus hope ever to unite ?
Bloodshed and war may well a tender maid affright !"

“See!” Rudolph said, “how yonder clinging vine
Encircles in its leafy arms the oak:
Ev’n as its tendrils tightly clasp and twine
The giant branches, sheltering from the stroke
Of cutting hail, and the fierce storm-wind’s blast,—
So is a tender maid’s affection cast!
She too seeks, like the vine, to gain for weakness, strength.
Despair not of thy suit, thou’lt win her heart at length!

“’Tis not when summer skies are bright and clear
The vine needs shelter from the mighty tree:
In peaceful times the peaceful see no fear,
But fly for refuge in extremity!
Experience she, like yonder vine, will gain,
When once she feels affliction’s bitter pain:—
When the dread blast of war doth shake in storm the earth,
Then first acknowledge we the brave defender’s worth.

“Hilda is still a child, and changeful yet:
She likes thee, Eric, that at least is plain!
At maiden waywardness thou must not fret,
Nor ever think her love thou wilt not gain.
Her heart is true, believe me, to the core,—
She feels aversion to thy trade of war:
To us, too, war may come—sooner than she doth think;
Ev’n now, it seems to me, we stand upon its brink.

“The Kaiser, since his arms throughout the land
Have been victorious o’er his Danish foe,
Threats on our liberties to lay his hand,
And deluge Germany anew with woe.
Nuernberg, mine own beloved native town,
Feels now his anger, dreads his vengeful frown.
This latest Edict he has even just proclaim’d
Strikes at her liberties, throughout all Europe famed.

“Eric! I little thought, when first I made
Thy friendship, now some eighteen months ago,
What time thy sire with us in Nuernberg stay’d,
That Swedish blood for Germany would flow;
They were the first, thy countrymen who died
Nobly on Stralsund’s walls, to stem the tide
Of Austria’s lust of rule, and Rome’s relentless hate,
Now thousands more I fear, alas, must share their fate!

“If this must be, it never shall be said
That Germans hung back from Religion’s war!—
That German breasts were to all honour dead,—
That they no part in Freedom’s battle bore!
If German princes will not standards rear,
The German youth will flock from far and near
To Gustave’s trumpet-call, and, sinking paltry pride,
With Lutheran Sweden stand in battle side by side.

“Should this dread war, that I see looming, rise,
Eric must do for me a true friend’s part,—
Must find me favour in Gustavus’ eyes,—
Must ope the way to thy great Monarch’s heart!
No captain have we who our cause can save,
Christian of Brunswick dead, and Mansfeld brave;
Nor is there German Prince can mine allegiance claim,
On Nuernberg’s burgher roll—there written stands my name

“But Nuernberg’s walls are strong, her ditch is deep,
And deadly is her cannons’ withering fire:
Let men advanced in years her ramparts keep,
Her youth she cannot in the town require!
Far better service may bold spirits yield
By taking part with Sweden in the field.
As soon as e’er Gustave shall land on German ground,
Among his followers I would ev’n first be found.

“But, Eric, 'tis an awful thing this war,—
Necessity must justify the course!
How fearful were the thund'ring cannon's roar
In this blest vale,—how dread the spoiler's force!—
On our wide bend's sweet prospect cast thine eye,
On Traubeneck's fair tower perch'd up so high
Upon the rock's steep top,—woods, vineyards, at its feet,
In truth, a lovely scene,—a peaceful pleasure seat!

“Look on yon stream, shut in on every side
By vine-clad hills, no outlet canst thou see:
Here could one all one's life in joy abide,—
Here might one even spend Eternity!
The air is laden with the fragrant breath
Of blooming vine,—nought here of war or death.
E'en Paradise itself could scarce show scene more bright;
Like molten silver gleams the flood in golden light!

“And there the houses cluster on the brink,
The thresholds almost bathed in river foam:
All seems so joyous, who would ever think
That war may desolate our lovely home?
For miles each bend of this our brimming Rhine
Shows landscapes just as fair,—such homes as mine,—
Gardens and vineyards rich, woods hanging o'er the stream,
Reflected in the wave, as in a mirror gleam.

“Ev'n heathen, one would say, this spot might tread
With reverence seemly, as though hallow'd ground,
With deep humility might bow the head,
Acknowledging their God in all around:
Then can they dare, who boast the Christian name,
To hasten on our Saviour's Kingdom claim,
Our lovely Paradise to turn to worse than Hell?
Alas! the peaceful Rhine an awful tale could tell.

"The River that flows by in tranquil flood
 Could speak of regions, not so far away,
Where mountain rivulets ran red with blood,
 Where Christian torches turn'd the night to day,
The day to night with clouds of stifling smoke;—
 Could tell of orchards fell'd by wanton stroke,
Of vineyards rooted up, and gardens trodden down,
Of smouldering ruins vast, where stood the busy town.

"For Tilly left behind a barren track,
 As through the fertile Pfalz his armies swept;
My burning words the needed curses lack,—
 For orgies, worthy demons, there they kept!
And yet they say that Wallenstein's wild horde
 With slaughter ravages, with fire and sword,
Ten times more ruthless still,—far worse the peasants fare:
Tilly with Wallenstein we may not e'en compare!

"Thank God! when threat'ning most, an alter'd course
 That savage war took towards the Baltic coast;
Turn'd from the Rhineland was its reeking force,
 And Tilly march'd against King Christian's host.
But reason have we now again to fear;
 No longer can we count on safety here;
Subsistence must be found for Friedland's famish'd bands:
Where can they better speed than in these teeming lands?

"The vintage promises a goodly year,
 A blossom-time like this I never knew;
The wheat already shows the pushing ear,—
 The fruit-trees will be heavy laden too;
Yet dare we not to count upon our store,—
 Long ere the harvest ripens may the war
Burst with its storm upon our quiet, fertile vales,
And desolation reign throughout the Rhineland dales.

"Oh! could the Kaiser see with his own eyes
 What misery already has been wrought,—
 Could he but hear his subjects' deep-drawn sighs,—
 Could he but know how dear is victory bought,—
 Surely, for pity's sake, he would relent!
 Far—far too much already has been spent
 Of German treasure in this lengthen'd, bitter strife!
 And who can estimate the loss of German life?

"And what can Romish Jesuits hope to gain
 By driving us to last extremity?
 How can a Christian gloat on Christians' pain?
 We Lutherans will suffer,—ay, will die,—
 Ere they shall close our churches, and compel
 Us to renounce the Faith we love so well!
 Eric, on Sweden now our longing looks are cast,
 If thy King Gustave fail, then all our hopes are past!"

"Gustavus will not fail like Denmark's King,"—
 Said Eric, "on my word thou may'st rely;
 The world ere long shall with his victories ring,
 Or he, and all his hardy Swedes, will die!
 No selfish peace with Austria will *he* make,
He fights for Conscience,—not for Glory's sake!
 From Rome's dread fetters *he* the Lutheran Cause will free,
 To all these lands secure their hard-won liberty!

"My Sovereign promised, when he sent me forth,
 That I his presence should again attend;—
 When this Religion's war breaks out in wrath
 Thou shalt with me his person, too, defend:
 I'll plead thy suit before my gracious King,
 Another Eric to his camp I'll bring!
 Nor do I fear at all he will refuse our boon:
 These idle days shall yield to years of daring soon!

"Then, when the war is done, with laurels crown'd,
We on our glorious victories will rest !
Thou in thine ancient town the most renown'd,
With Hilda I shall deem myself most blest !
If Sweden's winters prove for her too bleak,
Refuge with thee in Nuernberg we will seek,—
Each year we'll come as soon as the cold north winds blow,
Long ere the Swedish hills are wreathed with mantling snow.

"And with the swallows in the joyful spring,
Thou shalt return with us each summer time,
When to thy ken new glories I will bring ;
Together we my native rocks will climb.
This peaceful dale is matchless in its way,
But my soul dwells on our well-shelter'd bay,
That owes its beauties all to nature, not to art ;
To me its memories fresh longing do impart.

"It is a scene I would describe to thee,
Could mortal tongue but justice to it render :
In front is stretch'd the heaving, boundless sea,
Behind rise hills like these, in rugged splendour,—
Their summits hoary with the winter's snows.
Between them to the bay a river flows,
A river broad as this, but rushing, white with foam :—
Well might the Vikings choose such spot for warriors' home !

"Thy Rhineland air is sweet with blooming vines,
And grateful is the juice which ye express ;
But let me scent the healthful mountain pines
That clothe our hill-sides with a dark blue dress.
Our rocky slopes can boast no generous wine,
No towers have we like these upon the Rhine :
One needful product still our barren mountains yield,—
That Swedish steel with which our warriors take the field.

“Thy fertile lands may rear a cultured youth—
(We rugged Swedes are cast in sterner mould),
And winsome maidens,—I admit its truth!
Our Swedish maids are, like our warriors, bold.
But if we Swedes are iron-framed and tough,
And, like our stormy seas, our manners rough,—
Our hearts are tender as a maiden's, true as steel,
And for our brethren's wrongs most deeply can we feel.

“What land can show so good—so great a King?
What King can show such loyal subjects true?
Each Swede would count it but a little thing
To suffer for him,—ay, die for him too!
Gustave himself deems his own royal life
As nothing worth, in this momentous strife;
For Lutheran Liberty he 'd freely risk his crown,
For Sweden's Freedom would his very life lay down.

“Then think not that the Kaiser can withstand
Such noble-minded heroes in the field:
Adventurers, the dregs of every land,
Perforce must to Devotion's valour yield!
Despite all risks, we rally to her call,
Venturing our lives, yet confident withal;
Just is our Cause, nay right, that is the better word:
It were unrighteous now undrawn to leave the sword.”

Thus the two youthful friends arranged their parts,
And built, as sanguine youth will ever build,
Bright, airy castles, after their own hearts:
How seldom are such golden dreams fulfill'd!
And so the days sped on in converse sweet,
Each in the other found his soul complete:
Eric his suit no more with desperate ardour press'd,
His love to Hilda told, now time must do the rest.

Fast sped the summer by at Traubeneck,
Where Love and Friendship whiled the weeks away ;
And little did the happy dalesmen reck
What happen'd in the world beyond :—each day
To them brought its absorbing cares,—to tie
And prune the vines,—the vintage now draws nigh ;
The corn is ripe and cut, the choking barns it fills,
The grapes begin to change upon the sunny hills.

Out in the world the harvest ripens, too ;
The wind's been sown for years on teeming soil :
The Jesuits and the Kaiser soon shall rue
Their machinations and their selfish toil ;
Who the wind sow'd shall reap the whirlwind dread !
The Lutheran lands till now alone have bled ;
The Catholic shall hear, in turn, the avenging tramp
Of Lutheran Conqueror, and din of hostile camp.

And yet affairs seem'd wondrous promising
To Austria and the Roman Catholic cause ;
Friedland imposed upon the Danish King
A shameful peace: no more in German wars,
On any pretext, should he interfere ;
No more the Lutheran banner might he rear.
Dishonourable peace he gain'd at such a price,
Nor did he hesitate his friends to sacrifice.

Gustavus to the Congress statesmen sent,
The cause of Mecklenburg's two Dukes to plead :
But all in vain his burning words were spent,
Christian would none of his reproaches heed ;
And Friedland haughty arrogance display'd,
Threaten'd the Swedes with outrage if they stay'd,
And, treating them with scorn, and cutting, studied slights
Refused them all throughout ambassadors' due rights.

Thus vanish'd Denmark's Christian from the field
Of his ambition. He sought only fame !
Was forced at Lübeck everything to yield ;
Gain'd nothing but contempt, and traitor's name.
He promised fairly,—made a great pretence,—
But his allies found him a poor defence—
His own lands given back, he left them in their throes,
Bleeding and helpless to the mercy of their foes.

And now again the Kaiser, had he chose,
Might to all Germany have given peace ;
Again it rested with him to dispose
His peoples' fortunes, to bid battles cease ;
Catholic and Lutheran firmly to unite,
And reign o'er German undivided might,
Had he a juster sense of his first duties shown,
And left the Lutheran faith and liberties alone.

Twelve years of bloodshed now had well-nigh cured
The stubborn, vengeful spirit of each side ;
The country too much misery had endured,—
Too far had spread out Desolation's tide ;
The Catholics had known too much of wrong,
To wish such scenes of suffering to prolong.
For peace and quiet times the plunder'd districts groan ;
Humbly the burgher-guilds approach the Imperial throne.

But Rome consider'd that the war was done,
No longer need she any mercy show :—
To end determined as she had begun,
And trample down the bleeding, conquer'd foe.
The Kaiser had the Lutherans long forbidden
Freedom of worship, Liberty o'erridden,
In his own Austrian lands, throughout the Palatine's
Had closed their churches too, and banish'd their divines.

And now he thought he might still further go :
The Restitution Edict he proclaim'd,
And call'd upon the Protestants to show
What had been done with the Church lands he named ;
Order'd that all to Rome should be restored,
Or Wallenstein would take them with the sword.
First on this list there stood two rich archbishop's sees,
Then came twelve bishoprics, and scores of monasteries.

This Edict came down like a thunderclap
Upon the Lutherans, who now saw plain
The Jesuits meant their liberties to sap
With fresh demands while aught was left to gain :
By one tyrannic mandate they beheld
Their churches closed, the Faith so firmly held
Through dread vicissitudes for generations past,
Down trodden under foot,—Truth's light put out at last.

Nor could they more by force of arms withstand
The Austrian Edict, as they wish'd to do :
Friedland was far too mighty in the land,—
The scatter'd Lutheran forces far too few,
To dare to venture forth into the field ;
Now nought was left but sullenly to yield :
The Jesuit policy thus triumphs everywhere,
And to restore the sees the Lutherans must prepare.

And his high-handed tyrannies succeed
Completely in the Austrian Kaiser's eyes :
The Lutherans, sore driven in their need,
Seek only to gain time, and temporise ;
The Catholics, contented to progress
Surely if slowly, do not harshly press ;
But long before the lands they coveted were gain'd,
Gustavus' victories the failing cause sustain'd.

But let us pass again to brighter scene
At Traubeneck, where now the grapes are ripe :—
The cellarers the bulky hogsheads clean,
The maids the lighter vessels scald and wipe ; .
Long rows of wine-butts line the castle yard,
Like burly sentinels they keep the guard
Over the cellars' wide and massive oaken doors,
Where lie their fellows full of past years' liquid stores.

'Tis vintage eve,—and all is mirth and joy,—
By eager throngs the grindstones are beset
Of happy children ; every girl and boy,
Each maiden, brings a pruning-knife to whet ;
The busy coopers tighten up the hoops,
The lusty village youths stand round in groups ;
The bearers' measures now are fitted to their backs,
And round the wine-cups pass, and pledges no one lacks.

Upon one side Hilda and Eric stand,
Watching the youths and merry maids at work ;
Hilda a pruning-knife puts in his hand,
And in her twinkling eyes arch glances lurk :—
“ Sir Knight, to-morrow thou shalt try thy blade,—
And Swedish smith for Viking never made
A better one than this,—see that thou wield it right,
If thou wouldst not succumb to maidens in the fight.

“ To-morrow thou shalt serve in my command,—
Shalt show that thou art worthy of the place
Where I will set thee in my trusted band,—
To do a hero's part before my face.
Into the field my maidens I will lead,—
Look to thy threaten'd laurels, valiant Swede !
Get thee,—take my advice,—full soon to-night to rest ;
Thou wilt be overcome unless thou dost thy best !”

"This is, in truth, a novel sort of sword,—
But thou commandest, I must needs obey;
And sweeter were,—Hilda, believe my word,—
Defeat with thee, than victory away!
By thine arch smile I see thou dost prepare,
But how I know not, in some way a snare
To take me unawares: if so, I am content,
For then my captive life with thee will needs be spent."

"Nay, Sir," said Hilda, "as a caged bird
I would not keep thee: thou canst only sing
One tune,—one song from thee alone is heard,—
The praise of Sweden, and thine idol-king,—
But that is neither here nor there; we spoke
Of gallant deeds of venture, doughty stroke,
Tumultuous battle shout, and steel's contending clash,
Of thundering cannons' roar, and muskets' deadly flash:

"Of all this nothing do I wish to know,—
To me it seems a very dreadful thing
That man should cause his fellows' blood to flow
That warrior's fame throughout the world should ring.
I am no judge of soldier's hateful art,
Of sword or matchlock, cannon, spear, or dart!
Nor do I wish the seas, the treach'rous seas, to roam!—
Why are not men content to stay like us at home?

"I cannot urge thee on to martial deeds;
Nor have I use to which to put thy sword:
From armed men my suffering country bleeds,
Its bravest blood seems but in vain outpour'd!—
Thou art my champion,—I thy ladylove,
Thou sayest;—then, Sir, thy devotion prove!
No desperate feat of arms for my fair sake I ask,
Nor will I e'en demand of thee a dangerous task.

“But it is only custom, just and right,
Thou shouldst me service render, I am told :
The same was done by every gallant knight
Who sought adventure in the days of old.
I am a demoiselle, in truth, forlorn !
My mother died the day that I was born :
So thou, Sir Errant Knight, must my behest fulfil ;
Which done, thou mayst depart, and fiery dragons kill !

“Wert thou not here, myself would take a row,
And fill the baskets, as I have before ;
This year my task on thee I will bestow,
Thou shalt help gather in our vintage store ;
Among my maidens thou shalt take thy stand,
And cut and sort the grapes with nimble hand :
Thy unaccustom'd work will not be light, I fear,
The clustering bunches hang so very close this year.”

“So be it, Hilda, I will undertake,
This bold adventure on the steep hill-side ;
I'll do my best for my fair lady's sake ;
Thy champion, Hilda, love ! thou must not chide
If he is by thy village maids outdone,—
The battle were, in truth, inglorious won
With maids contending thus, for how can gallant knight
Do his devoir at all in such unequal fight ?”

“Come, Hilda, love !” cried Nuernberg's magistrate,
Her father, who came now into the yard,—
“If thou art ready, let them ope the gate.
Ho there ! see that the fast'nings are unbarr'd :
All is prepared against the morrow's dawn,
We'll dance a measure on the velvet lawn ;
That is, you younger folks,—our dancing-days are past ;
Make the best use of youth and pleasure while they last !

“Thy grandmother and I will take our stand
At the great window in the castle hall,
And watch the merry couples joining hand.
Eric, the guest must ever lead the ball;—
In Sweden sight like this thou canst not see,
The vintage is our great festivity!
Come, lads and lasses now, dance merrily till night,
Then to your slumbers all, and up with dawn's first light!”

He said, and open wide he throws the doors,
Into the gardens burst the happy troops;
Light-hearted youth with glad confusion pours
In lively stream upon the grass. In groups
The elders stand, and talk of corn and wine,
Of vintages gone by and harvests fine.
Some praise this year, some that, but all alike agree
A heavier crop of grapes than now there scarce could be.

The merry lads and laughing maidens dance
In numerous rings upon the grassy lawn,
And loving look is met by melting glance
More eloquent than words. But now the horn
Called old and young to bounteous supper feast;
The music and the dancing promptly ceased:
Justice to the good cheer by all is freely done,
Then to the village home they wend them with the sun.

Next morn the vineyards swarm with joyous life,
Each village maid and matron staid is there,
Each child that may be trusted with a knife;
The older women do the meals prepare
A captain is elected to each band,
And in the narrow pathways waiting stand
The broad-back'd lusty youths, their arms pass'd thro' the laps,
Which hold their measures on with leather shoulder-straps.

Eric and Hilda come and take their place,
And all is ready,—see, they now begin!
The maidens heap their baskets up apace
With purple grapes, and pack them closely in;
One bearer's measure thus with fruit they fill,
And slowly climbs the staggering youth uphill;
A second follows soon, a third, and in the wood
The first is lost to view, while there the last yet stood.

And then the first comes back by different road:
His measure emptied, nimbly now he leaps
Down the hill-side, and waits another load;
And soon again he climbs the rocky steeps.
And thus the work goes on the whole morn long,
Varied with sounding shouts and merry song.
Among the branching vines all tinted gold and green
The maidens' dainty forms are on the hill-side seen.

Loud through the castle yard the echoes ring
With noisy cries, and bearers' heavy tramp,
In chant and chorus still the treaders sing,
Beating the measure with their vigorous stamp:
With both their hands they hold the mashtub's rim,
Which yet is piled with grapes above the brim;
And thus, with all their weight, the precious fruit they tread,
Their hands and faces splash'd with stains of purple red.

Into the vat below the bright juice flows,
Ruddy in hue, but foaming snow-white froth:
Each loaded bearer up the ladder goes,
And bending casts the purple bunches forth
From his heap'd measure, towering o'er his head,
Into the mashtub where his fellows tread.
The golden grapes are set in separate tubs aside,
The best Rhine wine to make,—a wine famed far and wide.

These are not trod at first, the berries' weight
Compels the pearly teardrops to exude ;
The tubs are loaded with the precious freight,
And yield a wine too rare for palates rude ;
And when by age matured the noble brand
Will,—such its worth,—the highest price command.
When they no longer weep, then first these grapes are press'd,
And all the after-juice is mingled with the rest.

And now the sun stands highest in the skies,
And beats upon the hills with fervid ray :
To keep pace with the maidens Eric tries
In vain, and laughing, Hilda comes his way :—
“Thou laggst behind, the fight is but begun !
How, Sir ! art thou so very soon outdone ?
Foremost in every field, I always understood,—
The grapes will all be pick'd long ere thou gain'st the wood

“Is this the gallant soldier,—valiant knight,—
Who ever seeks advent'rous—desperate deed ?
Out, laggard!—hide in future from my sight :
Thou art no warrior,—champion thou in need !
Thy ladylove would languish in the tower,
Would pine and sicken in the giant's power
With hope deferr'd, and die in sad captivity,—
Thou wouldst come much too late to set thy sweetheart free !”

“Fair Lady,” Eric answered, “*thou* art free,
But *I* am under the Enchanter's spell !
'Tis needful thou shouldst even come to me
And help me, Hilda,—thou canst succour well.
I do my best, but I can not keep pace,
For warrior's thews and sinews in this race
Count little ; here I want a maiden's taper fingers,—
My clumsy manhood's strength the task helps not, but hinders.”

“ Well, then, Sir Swede, the maid must rescue thee ;
Nor shall her tardy champion suffer shame !
But what reward therefor wilt thou give me ?—
What guerdon shall my render'd service claim ?
If thee I help, and gather by thy side,
Thy sinewy arms shall row me o'er the tide
This eve, upon the Rhine's bright silver-sparkling stream,
And on its glassy wave we'll chase the shy moonbeam.

“ But now I see the mid-day meal is spread,
The hour has come for food, and rest, and song,
And foaming cups of new-press'd wine so red :
So lay aside thy blade, and come along !
Beneath the trees that line the water's edge,
See ! all are gathering,—near the rustling sedge.
The water's soothing splash, falls sweetly on the ear :
Oh, 'tis a joyous time, the vintage crowns the year !”

So downwards to the river's bank they go,
And gladly seek the tall trees' grateful shade ;
Where cooling breezes o'er the waters blow,
Close by the brink, on grass, their table's laid ;
There Eric spreads his cloak for Hilda's seat,
And throws himself at full length at her feet.
The maids and matrons take their places on the ground,
The bearers hand the meats,—children, the new wine,—round.

Right merrily they feast, and laughter gay
And rustic jokes are heard on every side ;
For Hans asks Gretchen fair to name the day,
And Gretchen tries her rosy blush to hide,
And turns away, pretending not to hear.
The husband asks his bride of scarce a year
If she remembers still last vintage—plighted vow,
And Love's betrothal kiss,—does she repent it now ?

She makes no answer, save to press his hand,
And kiss the lovely babe upon her breast,—
And wishes every wife throughout the land
Were with such loving husband truly blest.
The happy children out the ashes rake,
And from their tiny ovens, shouting, take
Chestnuts, and monster plums, and apples smoking hot,
And fill the holes again to bake another lot.

For they had dug down deep beneath the fire,
Ere the old women cook'd the mid-day meal;
Such heavy work might well their young arms tire,
But they to-day no weariness can feel.
These holes they fill'd with fruit, the orchard's spoil,
Cover'd with turf, and then replaced the soil,
Upon the top of all they piled up high the wood,
And, patient round the fire, the morning long had stood.

But now the cooking done, with eager haste,
They quickly open up their buried store;
In such a hurry are they all to taste,
Water upon the steaming fruit they pour.
And quarrel soon, and one another chide,
Over the question how they shall divide,—
Their mothers hasten up the threat'ning strife to still,
And peace restored again the youngsters eat their fill.

The bigger boys, long ere the feast is done,
Light crackers, and their screaming sisters chase,
And fast and furious soon becomes the fun.
After the timid maids the urchins race;
Among the matron groups their squibs they fling,—
With shrieks and pealing laugh the mountains ring.
The fizzing serpents hiss, and run along the ground,
And shouts, and cries of fear, and fireworks' bangs resound.

Such scene 's enacted under Eric's eyes :
He sees and hears it all, but does not note,
To Hilda's mirthful sallies scarce replies ;
Absent he seems, his scatter'd thoughts remote.
At length she cries, her patience fully spent,—
"Eric! is 't not enough my aid is lent
To speed thy task? Must I strive all this noontide long
My champion to amuse in vain? Come, Sir, a song!"

"Ah, Hilda! true my thoughts were far away,"
Said Eric; "still my wandering mind was thine!
Hilda! to thee my soul doth homage pay,—
E'en now thou art the goddess of my shrine :
Thy image in mine heart hath found its place,—
Have pity, then, bestow on me thy grace.
Far to our Swedish shores did my fond spirit roam,
As guardian angel there, I led thee, Hilda, home."

"Talk not to me of Swedes nor angels either!
Our work in hand is quite another thing ;
At present, Eric, wish I to be neither,—
I did not bid thee speak, I bade thee sing!"
"What shall I sing? Not mine the tunes of love
Wherein the German youths their passion prove :
My songs are of the camp, or of the boisterous sea,
Whate'er I know of love, Hilda, I learn'd from thee!"

"From Norseland's bleak rocks the Sea-king went,
On venture bent :
His dragon* they launch'd, the war-ship fast,
And stepp'd the mast :
The sail half-unfur'd in the breezes loud flapp'd :
Fierce foam-crested waves on the pine timbers lapp'd.

* War-ships were termed "dragons" by the Norsemen.

“His flowing beard was whiter than snow,—
His step was slow,—
Age had not dimm'd his eagle eye keen :
That noble mien
Him for one who was born to command betray'd ;
And no man had seen him in danger afraid !

“Haughty his bearing, proudly erect,
Little he reck'd
The stormwind's blast :—the fiercer it blew,
The faster flew
His dragon's iron prow through the foaming wave ;
For the sea is the Viking's home—and his grave !

“High in the stern he leant on his blade,
His crew survey'd :—
Each man he knew well for warrior bold,
Though now grown old ;
For full oft had they proved their desperate might,
And had fought at his back in many a fight.

“‘Old friends of my youth,’ the hero said,
‘The rest are dead !—
My ship is enough us to contain
Who still remain !
By our sons our wide roving fleets are now mann'd,
Like their fathers before them a valiant band !

“‘Let us then seek the Isles of the Blest,
Far in the West !
There shall we ever our youth renew,
In æther's blue,
Where the peaceful ripple the shore hardly wets,
Where night is unknown,—where the sun never sets.

“ ‘Doubtful,—more fraught with danger this quest
Than all the rest :
Scarce can we hope that land e’er to reach,
That peaceful beach ;—
More likely shall sail to the edge of the world
Where, in the dread chaos, the oceans are hurl’d.

“ ‘Death’s face have we seen, comrades, before,—
Full oft in war ;
In that seething pool *we* will not quail,
Our hearts not fail :
No matter to us how he comes, friends, at last,
His power is soon over,—his pangs are soon past !’

“ They shook out the sail,—down the sun’s ray
Sped fast away :
In sunset’s glory were lost to view
War-ship and crew.
It may be they e’en found the Isles of the Blest
But if not,—feasting high with Odin they rest !”

He ceased,—e’en Hilda’s tongue was still, perforce,
For some short while : “ It was a gallant end,—
But yet I cannot praise their desperate course,
And who would wish a life like theirs to spend ?”
At length she said ; “ But times are alter’d now,
No longer do the Vikings’ war-ships plough
The waters’ wide expanse, the ocean’s stormy wave ;
No more their hardy sons its unknown dangers brave.”

“ ’Tis true their day is gone,—for ever past,
The nations dread their roving fleets no more ;
Their ships no longer scud before the blast,
No longer hold in terror every shore ;



In sunset's glory were lost to view
War-ship and crew.

But yet their daring spirit in their sons
Still lives,—the peoples in whose veins there runs
The bold Norse blood, e'en though diluted thirty-fold,*
Still venture both by land and sea, like them of old!

“The merest drop will yet itself assert,
And spur the warrior to undying fame!
Hilda! how canst thou ask me to desert
Sweden, my King, the camp? That blood I claim
In fullest flow,—unbroken, pure descent:
My youthful life must needs in fight be spent!
We both are young,—can wait,—let me now do my part;
Then clasp, the battle won, thy champion to thy heart.”

“How, Sir! a pretty boon in sooth to beg!
Am I to wait till I am grey and old,—
When thou wilt come, perchance, with wooden leg,—
Perchance may'st lack the arms thy staff to hold?
When thou thy Viking's gleaming blade canst wield
No longer, I may serve as staff and shield!
And do my champion's tasks, e'en as this noon I must,—
Far different is the fate in store for me, I trust!”

“Nay, love! were I reduced to sorry plight,—
And what may happen, Hilda, who can tell?—
My selfish suit to press I'd have no right,—
Thy champion loves thee, Hilda, far too well!
The greatest victory—o'er myself I'd gain,
Though it would be unutterable pain:
My love would be so great, I would e'en step aside,
Content that thou shouldst be another's happy bride.”

* *I.e.*, Through thirty generations.

The rising tear stood now in Hilda's eyes,
She loved him more than she would e'en confess
To her own inmost soul; in vain she tries
To hide her face, to smother her distress.
And what had happen'd let a maiden tell,—
Hilda had yielded heart and hand as well
To Eric then, methinks :—ere he advantage press'd
Loud blew the grating horn, to call from mid-day rest.

Straightway the merry, laughing groups break up :
The pickers hasten to their work again,
The bearers pass round the last hurried cup,
The wine-cask to its very dregs they drain ;
The shouts, and cries, and banging fireworks, cease,—
Where all was noise and clamour, now is peace.
Hilda gain'd time, and soon her melting weakness rued ;
For girlhood ever is of changing, wilful mood !

And so she turn'd her face, and said aloud,—
" Thy song hath quickly whiled the time away,
I'll help thee now, if thou art not too proud
For maid to succour in the battle day :
When in the line we once are well ahead,
We'll sail upon the river, as I said,
By moonlight ; later on, when we regain the strand,
Thou in the merry dance shalt take again my hand."

Thus the first happy vintage day was pass'd,
The second sped as quickly too away.
Such joyous time could not much longer last,—
All will be gather'd in another day.
For the whole year a full supply is press'd
Enough, and still to spare,—so greatly blest
Have been the rocky hills along the sunny Rhine,
Blest with a golden store of fruit, and corn, and wine.

The third day little more was left to do ;
High up the hill the line of pickers stood,
The bearers' heavy tramp was shorten'd too,—
By noon the last were pick'd. Into the wood
That form'd the leafy frame to picture fair
Of that red sandstone tower, all crowded there,
The old and young alike, a happy, joyous throng,
To spend the afternoon in feast and merry song.

The Magistrate had liberally prepared
A banquet for all comers, in the shade,
Nor had his larder nor his cellars spared ;
Such bounteous spread but once a year was made.
To Catholics, as well, the feast was free,
Pastor and Priest, for once, could well agree
To sink all differences at least for one day's space :
The Catholic gave thanks, the Lutheran said grace.

The seat of honour took the genial host,
His mother at his side the table graced,—
For years had Lady Alma fill'd the post.
Eric, as guest, at her right hand was placed ;
Hilda sat next ; and on the other side
Rudolph was first ; while, not to hurt his pride,
Precedence to the Priest the Lutheran pastor gave,
Though few were Catholics ; then came the doctor grave.

The festive board with fruits was loaded high,—
The clustering grape, the downy, luscious peach,
The purple plum, the fig with weeping eye,
The melting pear, arranged in easy reach,
And netted melons, scarlet-flesh'd and green,
All tastefully laid out on leaves were seen ;
And, best of all, a flask of Traubeneck's choice brand
For every guest was placed invitingly at hand.

Below the salt the crowded viands lie,
Far in the distance almost lost to sight.
The beechwood forms a vaulted canopy,
The greensward spreads beneath a carpet bright :
The hazel's feathery tracery takes the place
Of broider'd arras, shutting in the chace,
To form on either side a natural avenue,
Through which is caught a glimpse of glorious distant view.

For, looking through the leafy arch downhill,
The dazzling surface of the broad Rhine gleams,
Flashing in dancing radiance, never still,—
Reflecting far and wide the sun's bright beams,—
But oft as passing clouds their shadows throw
To deepest blue is changed the river's flow :
And far beyond, in haze of sultry autumn day,
Loom the peak'd mountain crests, in shadow dim and gray.

No sooner has the Magistrate sat down,
Than villagers come in on either side
And take their seats. The castle servants crown
The groaning tables with retainers' pride :
Two, on a mighty dish, the boar's head bear,
Two, venison pasties. Water, earth, and air,
Alike their tribute send to aid the vintage spread,
Fish, flesh, and fowl, good wine, rich fruits, and wheaten bread.

And so they feast upon the best of fare,
And one would think they had not broke their fast,
So quickly vanish'd the provisions there,
And all the time the circling wine-cup pass'd
From hand to hand : at length the noisy clatter
Of knife, and fork, and spoon, upon the platter,
Gave way to merry jest, and laughter loud, and song,—
For ever boisterous mirth must to these feasts belong.

The Magistrate now rises, silence gains,
And speaks :—"My friends! I do not wish your cheer
To stint in any way; kind Heaven rains
A golden shower of blessings this glad year;
We have great cause for joy, but it is right
On these occasions still to keep in sight
A limit to our mirth; in moderation, then,
Pass round the flowing cup,—acquit yourselves like men.

"The afternoon in joyous dance we'll spend,
In cheerful song, and merry rustic games;
Nor with the daylight shall the revels end,
The evening, too, our due attention claims.
My friends, I thank you all for willing toil,—
Without your help the precious crop would spoil.
Let none of us, my friends, His praise forget to sing,
From Whom all blessings flow, Who gives us everything!"

Hilda and Eric had arranged the while
Between themselves, an evening water-trip:
They would drop down the tranquil Rhine a mile
Or two, and from their tiny sailing ship
The fireworks and illuminations view;
For every hill on which the grape-vine grew
With torches and blue lights would o'er the waters blaze,
Each bend show varied scenes to their enchanted gaze.

Rudolph had left already to prepare
The fireworks, rocket-stands, and colour'd flames;
Next the huge bonfire needed all his care,
And he must then preside o'er rustic games.
For as the feast breaks up the men at bowls
And quoits amuse themselves; the huge ball rolls
Along the wooden way to where the ninepins stand
Group'd round their towering king, a bold, unflinching band.

The youths and maidens whirl in pairs away,
And then in circling rings join hands again ;
They have work'd hard, but harder still they play,
Their flowing spirits they can not contain.
Now all the rings in one long line unite,
Down the hill paths they dance, a pretty sight !
Along the river side, up through the woods they speed,
Their leaders following, no hindrances they heed.

The matrons watch the children's happy fun,
To keep them out of mischief vainly try,
For now and then some dire mishap is done,
And youngsters to their mothers screaming fly.
The noise is great, but far too loud to last,
And, like a summer storm, is quickly past ;
Just as the threat'ning cloud to the glad sun gives place,
With dimpling smiles is wreathed the urchin's tear-stain'd face.

The boys were all collected in a troop
And busily engaged. Around them lay
A pile of monster pumpkins ; these to scoop
Their joyful task, the rinds will them repay :
The seeds they save, but, as a goblin's head
They carve the emptied shell, which flashing red
From out the mouth, and eyes, and nose, at night appear'd
In curious masquerade of pumpkin-lanterns weird.

The short'ning autumn day draws to its close,
The bonfire's lit, the sheaf of rockets flies
High up to heaven, whence it bursting throws
Back colour'd stars, e'en from the highest skies
Down to the earth,—a gorgeous, dazzling sight,—
Leaving behind long trails of rainbow light :
And thus, the signal given, the hills reply all round,
Fires flash from every peak, explosions loud resound.

Hilda and Eric down the river sail,
A favouring breeze the bulging canvas fills :
O'er liquid fire they fly before the gale,
For countless lights blaze on the terraced hills
And throw a sparkling radiance on the wave.
They glide past lordly towers and castles brave
In grandeur gleaming out into the darkening night,
Illuminate with flames, and wreathed in brilliant light.

They sail past thriving hamlets, busy towns,
From whence the long torchlight processions wind,
Glimmering like giant glowworms. Threat'ning frowns,
As now they leave the fire-crown'd hills behind,
Inhospitably black, the Lurlei cliff,
The untimely grave of many a gallant skiff,
Whose crews, allured to wreck by the false Siren's strain,
No longer guide the boat, too late they strive in vain.

Before them all is dark and drear as death,
And hanging rocks now hem the river in,
While the swift stream, late by the south wind's breath
Scarce ruffled into ripples, foams within
Its narrow'd bed. Beneath the rocky base
Of those black cliffs the surging waters race,
Seething in boiling rage, sore chafing at restraint,—
In vain would artist try so wild a scene to paint !

“ Eric ” says Hilda, “ far enough we've gone !
And further than, methinks, is safe by night ;
We sail'd so fast before the south wind borne,—
Let us return to where the bonfires' light,
Reflected on the waves, gilds all with gold.
Behind is life,—before 'tis dread and cold !
Turn, then, at once, I pray, and I will sing the song
I promised thee this morn while swift we glide along.”

The boat is put about,—from shore to shore
She tacks against the breeze in zigzag course;
Upon one side the gurgling waters roar,
As she heels over with the double force
Of wind and stream: fast through the flood she flies,
Up from the rudder circling eddies rise,
Which, in her trailing wake, like fairy whirlpools boil,—
The water on the lee glides off as smooth as oil.

It is, in truth, a most enchanting sound
When from the bows the blinding spray is cast,
And the stout timbers quiver with each bound,
As the ship leaps before the freshening blast!
The sailor's heart beats high with love and pride,
He loves his vessel as he loves his bride,
His gaze in rapture fix'd he wonders how he'll fare
In Heaven itself, if he should find no ocean there.

Somewhat this nameless joy felt Eric now,
As grasping firm the sheet in his left hand,
He guided with the right the vessel's prow
Across the rushing stream, from strand to strand.
Hilda acknowledged, too, bewitching charm,
A sense of dread delight, of pleased alarm:
Not perfect Heaven, and yet not far removed from bliss;
As much in future world as one can be in this.

Silent she was, nor knew what held her tongue,
Listening enraptured as the wavelets splash'd,
While still loud shouts attendant echoes rung,
As in the sky the mounting rockets flash'd:—
Ghostlike and weird stood out in blue light's blaze,
Church spires, and massive towers; and twinkling rays
From beacons on the hills lit up the waves around:
At last, in purling song, Hilda her utterance found.

"Throned high on the top of the beetling rocks

The Lurlei sings :

The Siren's voice, borne on the Zephyr's breath,

Entices the boatman on to his death ;

And all his vain struggles the sweet strain mocks—

His death-knell rings.

"To stop he is ever constrain'd to listen,—

His boat drifts on,—

Upon the sharp crags its pieces are dash'd ;

High over the cliff the white foam is lash'd,

As into her halls where clear crystals glisten

He is drawn down.

"There once was a Prince would the Siren see,—

The risk he dared.

High on the rocks in the wind stream'd her hair,

Her arms, and her feet, and her bosom were bare ;

All stricken with love, like the rest, was he,—

Like them he fared.

"Commanded the King, in his flaming wrath,

The Lurlei seize :

Her to his palace his soldiers must bring,

Dead or alive, it was all the same thing,—

Never again should her music peal forth,

Borne on the breeze !

"The steep rock they climb, on the top they stand,

The foremost near :

Threat'ning the Siren around her they crowd.

The enchantress fears not, prays calmly aloud :

' Help, Father Rhine, stretch me forth thy right hand,—

Thy daughter hear !'

"The loud thunders peal, the fork'd lightnings flash,

Roars the storm blast ;

Two white steeds arise from out the waves' foam,
On the rock seated the maid they draw home,
Down to the deep crystal caverns they dash,
Galloping fast.

"The soldiers, in fear and dread, to the town
Baffled retire,
Tell to the King all they saw, all they heard :
The Monarch can scarcely believe their word ;
But in the courtyard the Prince is set down
With sulphurous fire.

"The Lurlei since then is seen never more,—
Broken her spell ;
But in fading light of the evening oft,
As they pass they still hear her music soft,
Mimicking songs that they sing to the oar,
The boatmen tell."

"No wonder," Eric said, "the nymph is fled
Beneath the wave, and dare not show her face;
In vain would all her Siren lures be spread,
For none would heed her captivating grace
Since mortal maid is now so passing fair.
Hilda, thy Rhine-blue eyes, and golden hair,
Thy lovely face and thy bewitching, fairy form
Eclipse the Lurlei's charms and take all hearts by storm !"

"Nay, Sir, if thou wilt compliment me, I'll——"
Her voice was lost in harsh and rending sound,
As the boat striking, hung for briefest while
Upon a floating spar, then made rebound.
In that dread moment's terror Hilda flung
Her arms round Eric's neck, and, trembling, hung
Upon his breast.—One kiss imprinted on her face,
He gently disengaged her clinging, close embrace.

"Hilda," he said, "we are far off from shore,
But yet I trust mine own true love to save.
Catch firmly hold with both hands of this oar;
I'll rescue thee, or find with thee my grave!—
Whatever happens, do not cling to me,
Nor struggle wildly, I will not leave thee!
Our lives on this depend,—remember, love, I pray,—
Thou must thine Eric now implicitly obey!"

"Oh, Eric! save thyself, why need both drown?"—
Hilda began, but loudly Eric cried
For help; his shouts were answer'd from the town
That lay below them on the other side,
And he could see that friends were there afloat:
Upon the gleaming waters danced a boat,
Impell'd by willing arms intent their lives to save,
Ere their skiff, heeling o'er, sunk down beneath the wave.

Down with it, deep, they sunk, e'en to the ground,
The oar, entangled, slipp'd from Hilda's grasp;
But Eric's arms held her encircled round,
And she, in first wild terror, strove to clasp
And clutch him tight; as to the top they rose,
Rememb'ring, she released him,—Eric throws
One arm around her form, strikes out the shore to gain,
But thus encumber'd finds, alas, the hope is vain.

He sees their only chance of safety lies
In floating down the swiftly-flowing stream:
To buoy up Hilda now alone he tries,
And shouts out to the boats. Behind them gleam
The festive lights,—for they are soon swept past,
And to the seething whirlpool hurried fast;
And Eric's strength is spent; scarce can he keep afloat;
No longer can he shout to guide the approaching boat.

He presses Hilda closely to his breast,—
His utmost he has done, without avail,
And all will soon be ended,—both at rest :
Just as his efforts cease, his spirits fail,
He feels a powerful grasp,—they're lifted out,
And none too soon the boat is put about.
Ere many moments pass, it gains the lighted strand,
Where, waiting eagerly, a crowd of people stand.

Hilda is carried to the doctor's house,
And Eric follows, fill'd with fearful dread ;
At the gate waits the doctor's kindly spouse,
Hilda is soon brought round and borne to bed :
The lady brings glad news for lover's ear,
No longer is there any cause for fear :
"A long night's rest," she says, "will set the maiden right,
For she is now restored, recover'd from the fright."

The doctor's clothes were at his service placed,
And in this sombre garb full soon array'd,
Back to the river Eric goes in haste :
The passage up to Traubeneck is made
Faster than ever boatman row'd before,
And ere the skiff's keel grates upon the shore
The youth leaps out, springs up the rocks with agile bounds,
And breathless gains at last the castle's torchlit grounds.

"Ha, Eric!" cried the worthy Magistrate,
"Come, take thy seat, and do thy proper share.
We miss'd thee in the dance, 'tis not too late,—
To-morrow thou must forth.—But Hilda—where?—
What means that dress? Speak, lad,—what's happen'd—tell
Where's Hilda—where?—" "Hilda is safe and well,"
He said, and told them all, and how the doctor's wife
With gentle care restored, and brought her back to life.

"Come, doctor,—mother, come,"—the father cried,
"And let us bring at once our dear child home!
Eric, come too!—thy boat waits on the tide?—
But stay, a courier from thy sire has come—
I had forgot—with message of import,
An hour or more ago. For thee he brought
Letters, which much I fear will summon thee away:
Stop and peruse them now, I'll see thee with the day!"

He said, and hurried quickly down the hill,
His mother and the doctor following fast:
Rudolph remain'd, confusion there to still
That Eric's tale had caused; and, till the last
Goblet was drain'd, banquet and song went on:
And long before the merry feast was done
The flickering torchlights paled, as, in the midnight sky,
Illuming all around, the brilliant moon stood high.

Then Rudolph came, at length, to Eric's side,
And said: "They say thy King's resolved on war,—
Eric! on thy good word do I confide."—
"And so thou mayest, Rudolph, evermore!"
Eric return'd. "My father's letters say
I must speed forth to him without delay:
Gustavus summons him to Sweden, back to Court,—
He first would be assured of Lutheran support.

"I must set out at dawn,—I only fear
That I shall not see Hilda ere I start:
Let me then, Rudolph, often from thee hear
How she doth fare, for she hath stole my heart;
And though I trust in time hers in return
To gain,—at present, laughing, she doth spurn
My futile suit,—and yet she ever leads me on.
Alas! I must away, leaving her heart half-won."

"'Tis won already, Eric!—canst thou doubt?—

My sister thou hast saved from death this night,
Risking thy life,—her heart can not hold out.

Thy presence gives her measureless delight;
To her own mind thy absence will make clear,
Eric, that thou—and thou alone—art dear!
But let us now to rest, 'tis late,—and by thy side
To-morrow I with thee a stage or two will ride."

Their horses in the courtyard saddled stood

Next morn, and they were ready to depart;

The Magistrate came down: "My boy, I would

Thank thee in words, but cannot,—from my heart
I thank thee. Thou art dear as mine own son!

Pray Heaven, it may turn out thou shalt be one,—
A second son to me! God bless thee, Eric, lad,
Gain Hilda's love, and thou wilt make her father glad!

"Thou didst not tell us all the tale last night,

The whole town with thy praises loudly rings;

Thine was a noble deed!—Hilda shall write

Herself, and thank thee. Lady Alma brings

Her home this morn, but too late to express

Her thanks in person; she shall write nathless,—

She'll not need telling,—but no more must I detain:
So farewell, lad, farewell,—may we soon meet again!"

No answer Eric made, but to his lip

His kind host's hand with reverence he raised;

The latter caught him in a loving grip,

Kiss'd both his cheeks, and all the while still praised

His gallantry. At length released he swung

Into the saddle,—gates were open flung;
Slowly the youths rode forth in the gray morning light,
Among the winding hills they disappear'd from sight.



BOOK III.

The Embarkation and Landing of Gustavus.

FAR into night the Swedish Council sate,
Continuing still the wavering debate,
And hesitated long, the question being grave,
 And fraught with weighty consequence :
But wonder not their hearts, though they were brave,
 And oft had proved it, hung back now and fail'd,
For it was not with fear their anxious faces paled.

Not for themselves they reck'd : their King might lead
 Them to the wide world's end, with him they'd bleed,
Nor why nor wherefore ask, but simply fight and die,—
 For they had perfect love for him ;
And yet their brows were bent, and every eye
 Was clouded o'er : the Council board throughout
Irresolution reign'd, uncertainty and doubt.

It was a matter of their country's weal,—
 It was a matter every one would feel
Hare-brain'd and desperate,—against the Austrian might
 Sweden's few veterans to hurl,
On German ground o'erwhelming power to fight.
 Full well they knew the price their neighbours paid ;
In vain had Denmark's King the mighty task essay'd.

Ev'n Oxenstierna thought the risk too great,
The youngest of the Councillors of State :
Gustavus made him Sweden's Chancellor,
Preferring him to older men,
Because he saw in him the imprint of Genius' power,
And promise of his talents' future might,—
The Monarch had the gift of judging men aright !

Ev'n he hung back, nor could approve the course
His King advised :—the Kaiser every source
Of German strength possess'd, well-nigh almighty stood
A victor on the German ground,
Was also back'd by Rome's intrigue,—how could
Gustavus' upright spirit ever hope
Against such fearful odds successfully to cope ?

Sweden was poor in men and poor in gold,
And what avail'd heroic valour bold
Against the Austrian power ?—'Twere better far to wait
Till Friedland's forces them invade,
Than to rush headlong on, halfway to meet their fate.
Thus thought the Chancellor ; but Gustave's mind
By ordinary rules was not confined.

His soul, like to the eagle, spread its flight
High in the heavens, far soaring out of sight
Of mortal ken ; to his exalted gaze reveal'd
Were, in a moment's space of time,
Things to his fellows all their life long seal'd ;
For most of us are bound, e'en from our birth,
By sordid ties which hold us captive down to earth.

He was indeed the greatest of his day,—
Like meteor flashing, but his gleaming ray

Destroying angel's path mark'd not, but glorious shone
O'er continent his life had saved
From Papal darkness,—and of him alone
Of Earth's great conquerors can it be said,
He gladly for mankind his generous life-blood shed.

In age he now had reach'd that golden time
When bounding youth gives place to manhood's prime ;
In his majestic mien true Genius held its seat,
And all that poets dream or sing
Of kingly virtues seem'd in him to meet.
His presence confidence inspired, his eye
Beam'd with a heavenly light, exalted, pure, and high.

His countenance o'erflow'd with tranquil grace,
Showing it was the joyous dwelling-place
Of spirit pure and true, reflecting bright his soul ;
His noble features all men won :
His people worshipp'd him, had gladly given the whole
Of their possessions had he ask'd a part,—
Their King was shrined in every subject's heart.

His soldiers loved him fondly,—well they might,—
The meanest man was precious in his sight
As his own royal life ; with them he freely bore
All hardships uncomplainingly,
His Genius lighted up the thickest night of war,—
Encircled round with death, he still forgot
Toil—danger—sharing there the common lot.

And thus at last as common trooper fell
By unknown hand : his death became him well.
No better had he wish'd himself,—could he have chose
Would not have chosen different :
Victory his death secured.—'Neath piled up foes,

Mud-stain'd and bloody, trodden in the ground,
By horse-hoofs trampled was his mangled body found.

But what of that! His Genius he bequeathed
His countrymen; for generations breathed
His spirit in their breasts, and still their souls inspired
To emulate his noble life.
Well might his warriors, then, by his example fired,
Dare all, risk all, nor any danger heed,—
Proud but to follow where he chose to lead.

His eagle glance pierced through the battle smoke,
Mark'd every error, saw each threat'ning stroke,
And crush'd it ere it came to head. No valiant deed,
That his heroic daring fired,
Escaped his notice there:—to gain from him the meed
Of praise was every soldier's proudest aim,
His approbation all-sufficient fame.

Nor was he merely boldest of the bold,
Well had he studied the campaigns of old:
From ancient Rome and Greece had learn'd the use
Of footmen, Europe learn'd from him.
His lofty mission ne'er did Gustave once abuse
As conqueror. Majestic he began,—
Majestic all throughout his kingly race he ran!

The nations wonder'd at the discipline,
The perfect order that held sway within
The Swedish camp, from which all luxury was bann'd.
The monarch's tent was no exception:
His fare the soldier's, and his first command
On landing still held force throughout the war,
Subjecting plunderers to death by martial law.

So Europe, wondering, saw a novel sight—
A conquering army using victor's might,
Not, as aye heretofore, the vanquish'd to oppress,—
With plunder to enrich itself:—
A Monarch, in full tide of conquest and success,
Acknowledging himself the instrument,
But nothing more, to work out Heaven's intent.

His veteran soldiers, morn and eve to prayer,
Closed round their chaplains in the open air,
Beneath the spacious vault of heaven, at bugle call.
Example, in devotion, set
Their King, as in the field—his faith was all in all—
Serving no sordid purpose, but sincere,
Guileless, and wholly free from servile fear.

Not like the Kaiser Ferdinand, who flung
Himself before his God in the dust, and wrung
His abject Kaiser-hands and grovelling in the mire,—
By creed, and policy enchain'd,
And Superstition's bonds,—hoping the Almighty's ire
Thus to appease by servile lamentation,
And for his sins to render compensation.

Thinking, vain fool! that God could take delight,—
The God who fashion'd Man alone upright
Of all His creatures,—in contorting throes,
In the debasement of His image,
And his God-likeness marr'd, could gloat o'er human woes,
Or in such slavish worship pleasure find,—
Measuring his Maker by his Jesuit-narrow'd mind.

Himself, before the Deity in the dust,
While humbling thus, his fellow-men he thrust

Down to the earth, and forced them all to bear his yoke,
And cringe in slavery to him.
So, well-nigh had he now the nations' spirit broke ;
His power supreme the German States must own,
And bow themselves before the Kaiser-throne.

Religion ever flourishes in state
Of Freedom best. She must degenerate
Into Hypocrisy, or Superstition,
Alike in tyrants and in slaves.
Sincere, but self-deceived, the Kaiser claim'd the mission
Of bringing back, enslaved to Jesuit sway,
The nations to the fold, from which they dared to stray.

Gustavus' worship was of different kind :
While to Heaven's guidance he himself resign'd,
A Christian Hero still he evermore remain'd ;
In his devotion ne'er forgot
He was a king ; and thus he never stain'd
With zealot's abject prayers his majesty,
Nor e'er his power abus'd by despot tyranny.

Not his ambition, selfish, to exalt
Himself at others' cost, or reckless vault
Into the highest seat of earthly fame and glory,
Using the nations as his stool
From whence to soar aloft. In History's page his story,
Writ in unfading characters of light,
Shines out as lonely star on darkest night.

Trusting in Heaven in all humility,
Yet conscious of his own ability,
He boldly now advised the impending war to carry
Across the sea to Austrian lands ;
The Lutherans to succour, not to tarry
In Sweden till the time to help was past,
Until the Protestants were fully crush'd at last.

The Council and the King agreed so far ;
'Twere folly still to hope t' avert the war :
The only question was how best to carry it on—

That was the point which they debated.
Gustavus saw their talk would ne'er be done ;
The dangers they foreshadow'd only woke
His lion mettle more, and thus at last he spoke :—

“If here in Sweden we await the foe,
Lost with the first lost battle is our cause ;
But let us make abroad but good beginning
And everything is won! The sea is wide,
And Sweden's coasts stretch far away,—to watch
And guard our lengthy shores effectually
Were difficult! While should the hostile fleet
Escape, or ours be beaten, how could we
Prevent a landing? Everything depends
Upon our holding Stralsund! Just so long
Shall we command the Baltic, as its harbour
To us stands open; 'tis of safe return
From Germany the pledge! But how can we
Defend the place by skulking here in Sweden?
Our armies must across! Let no man speak
Of our own mere defence, for we thereby
Our splendid vantages would throw away!
No hostile force must Sweden ever see.
When first from German ground we 're beaten, then
Will be the time your counsel to accept!”

Unanswerable was this argument ;
The Council yielded, and the Monarch sent
And ratified the truce proposed by Poland's King,
And then his armaments commenced.
In all the hero's measures, everything
Was carefully consider'd to command
Success abroad, at home peace for his native land.

While thus in Sweden these events proceed,
In Germany momentous times succeed :
The Kaiser could not now, with reason, still delay
 To call the Electors of the Realm
To meet at Regensburg, and we may say
 Ne'er had there been before such urgent cause
For Germany's Princes to revindicate her laws.

No sooner wère the Electors fully met
In council than the Kaiser was beset,
Alike by Protestant and Catholic, with tales
 Of harrowing misery and crime.
The Restitution Edict in the wails
 Of suffering was forgot ; and one and all
Grievance and injury were mindful to recall.

For Wallenstein had heaped in haughty spite
Insult on each in turn, and scornful slight.
The Kaiser was alarm'd. Petition on petition
 Against his General all directed,
Too plainly show'd the miserable condition
 Of the once prosperous, fertile German land.
Angry complaints pour'd in on him on every hand.

But Maximilian was the most aggrieved ;
His pride the greatest injury received
From Wallenstein's career. As Leader of the League,
 The part of Lawgiver had play'd
Bavaria's Duke, until to his intrigue,
 And high-flown hopes and schemes an end it set :
The haughty Prince a slight could never c'en forget.

Him to forgive, much less could one expect,
The man who his ambition's plans had wreck'd,

Who from the pinnacle of ever-soaring power
 Had ousted him, and snatch'd the fruits
Of all his victories, even in the hour
 Of proudest triumph, making them his own,
When Tilly Denmark's might for ever had o'erthrown.

Led on by him the Electors cried aloud
 Against the Duke of Friedland. Upstart, proud,
And overbearing, he, on every hand,
 Had made most deadly enemies.
The Princes of the League took up determined stand,
 And with the Protestant Electors made
For once a common cause, the General to degrade.

"In spite of your Imperial Majesty's
Assurances, the unbearable oppressions
Of Friedland's lawless armies cease not yet,
But wax still greater; and no longer can
Such misery be endured. Not in the church
Alone is worship now proscribed,—God's fear
Is from the people's eyes,—His honour due
From out their hearts, well-nigh now disappear'd!
And in their place, alas! reign shameful crimes,
Of which our pious fathers nothing knew
In former times. We Electors of the Realm
Have lost our old authority, and are
No more respected by our subjects now;
For we are all o'erridden by the power
Of this imperious General, and must brook,
As best we may, his haughty scorn and taunts;
And must keep silence while our subjects suffer
At his hands miseries unspeakable!—
He from the Electorate of Brandenburg
Extorted, in brief space of time, close on
To twenty millions, from Hessè seven,

From Pomerania ten, and gold from all
The other northern States in like proportion.
This treasure had the realm true service done,
And your Imperial Majesty as well,
In many ways!—but how is Germany
The richer by affronts her Princes suffer,
Or by the lashes, strokes, and penalties,
Dealt out by him on unoffending peasants?
Nay, even death he doth not hesitate
To inflict upon our subjects, till the stones—
The very stones—for mercy cry aloud!”

The address the Electors read the Kaiser moved,
For he was no barbarian, nor approved
The oppressive measures of his General, nor knew
Perhaps their full extent before.
But these assertions proved indeed too true,
And Ferdinand cannot be purged from guilt
In that, for his own ends, his people's blood he spilt.

But now these crimes were brought before his sight,
And in their naked horrors to the light
Of all the world, his share he must disown,
His General's cruelty condemn.
His reprimand he deem'd would for the past atone,—
Successful in persuading his own heart
To the belief he had in it himself no part.

And as he had his purpose fully gain'd
Through Friedland now, perchance not wholly feign'd
Was condemnation,—it might be that he was glad
To use the occasion as excuse
To lessen Friedland's power; and so he bade
Him eighteen thousand horse at once disband,
Hoping to satisfy the Diet by this command.

But if to further his own ends he thought,
And please the Electors too, he err'd ;—they sought
His General to depose,—with nothing less content
 Could Maximilian ever be,
Him to degrade the haughty Grand-duke meant.
The Kaiser's brother e'en found heart of grace
To speak up plainly there, and told him to his face :—

“Your Majesty can scarce believe how much
Your subjects suffer through the villainous way
In which this campaign is conducted now.
I know the people cannot hope to escape
In war-time scathless ;—but these awful burnings,
And outrages on women, and on children,
These murderings, plunderings, and mutilations,
By cutting off the nose and ears, besides
Tortures too horrible for one to mention.
These surely can the General, if he choose,
Prevent ! Your Majesty, well know I, will
Be told such acts atrocious are inventions,—
Have no existence ; but their horrid truth
Your brother voucheth,—him you may believe.
Alas ! 'tis no exaggerated tale !
The officers are cramming purses full
With gold wrung from the suffering peasantry,
Fattening upon the country's sweat and blood ;
And I could name you many who not long
Ago had scant resource, who now possess
Three or four hundred thousand ready gulden.
These sums they won not from their country's foes,—
They press'd them from their Catholic fellow-subjects !”

The deputation from the aged Duke
Of Pomerania also courage took, . .

As, swelling from all sides, these loud complaints they heard,
On Friedland fierce invective hurling,
To put in for their ravaged land a word ;
For Pomerania's misery was great,
And what they said was not without its proper weight.

"Our Duke received the Imperial soldiery
Within his lands, and open handed gave
To them, as friends, his palaces and towns
For billet,—but his subjects in return
Must misery endure !—With streaming eyes,
The plundered people hand their substance o'er,
Their furniture and goods, in place of gold
The officers demand ; e'en from their bodies
The shirts they wear are stripp'd ; Stettin alone
Is mulct ten million gulden ; and a team
Of oxen's valued by the impost collectors
Two thalers only, for which paltry sum
The peasants must their cattle yield to them.
A captain in the Imperial army lives
In style more princely far than our own Duke,
While common soldiers drain'd from every land,
The foulest dregs, by their own kin rejected,—
Lord it our State throughout, and treat, in truth,
Our people woefully,—trample and burn
Our growing crops and homesteads, devastate
Our towns, our churches plunder, and abuse
Our women, beat the men to death, and cast
Their bleeding corpses to the dogs to eat !"

Such are the upbraidings that the Kaiser hears.
Such horrors dinn'd into his tingling ears
Might well cause him to yield to the now fierce demand
That Maximilian formulates,
In which the Electors all concur on every hand,

The Duke of Friedland to depose, disgrace
And hurl down headlong from his power and place.

But Friedland, posted well in what occur'd
At the Imperial Council, long had heard
The threaten'd danger from his hireling crew.
Eclipsing there the Imperial pomp
He came to Regensburg. And now between the two
The Kaiser waver'd long, for Friedland show'd
The real source from whence all these heart-burnings flow'd

Nor found it difficult to make quite clear
To Ferdinand, the Electors did not fear
Himself so much, as dread the rising Austrian might,
To which they saw themselves subjected.
On him Bavaria chose to vent his spite,
For he at present dared to do no more;
But let him once succeed and he would higher soar!

"The unanimity with which they press
Their vehement demands, lays clearest stress
On secret motive: when they've weaken'd in the field,"
He said, "thine armies, and removed
Him who created them, they'll force to yield
To their control the House of Austria next,—
That is their true design, the other but pretext."

How to decide the Kaiser did not know,
One side he must offend; the pomp and show
Of Friedland's retinue embitter'd all the more,
And to his rivals' vengeful hate
Fresh impulse gave. Through Friedland in this war
He had gain'd his great preponderance, but still
It chanced he wanted now the Electors' whole good-will.

His son he wish'd the Princes to elect
As Kaiser after him ;—could he expect
Bavaria's haughty Duke's consent to gain thereto :
Without it 'twas no use to try :
Should he refuse, the vote must needs fall through ;
For on this point he took determin'd stand,
Entirely to remove Friedland from his command ?

He found at last that he must sacrifice
His General to his need. Although the price
Was heavy even now, much heavier than he thought
It proved in after years to him.
And yet he fail'd to gain the vote he sought,—
Friedland was sacrificed,—but when 'twas done,
The Princes after all would not elect his son.

Thus, when at last the Diet separated,
The gains the Kaiser had anticipated
Were still denied to him, while yet indeed his loss
Was most substantial, for he left
The Imperial city poorer by a force
Of eighteen thousand cavalry disbanded,
And by his General who the Imperial might commanded.

And not commanded merely, but who bade
Armies spring forth at his desire, and paid
Troops raised for Austria at the other princes' cost—
These armies he alone could hold
To Austria's standard, they too would be lost
To the Imperial service ; and 'twould be
Most dangerous to enforce ev'n this his own decree.

For at this very time the General stood
Lord of one hundred regiments, which he could

Against his Sovereign lead ; and who could safely say
 He would his high command lay down
And the Imperial warrant would obey,
 While he had power the injury to resent ?
 To his estates exil'd, would he retire content ?

Revolt he could make good if he but chose ;
 The Kaiser had no armies to oppose
Against his subject's might which he could call his own ;
 The officers were Friedland's choosing,
He could command their service was well known,
 They were his creatures ; while his slightest nod
 His soldiers all obey'd as though he were a god.

Whom could the Kaiser send, for who would dare
 To him, the Mighty One, the warrant bear ?
How would the haughty Duke receive him ? Even death,
 He would not scruple to inflict,
If 'twas the moment's mood,—for on his breath
 Hung human life, and all men were afraid
 Him to encounter when by raging passion sway'd.

At length two of the Imperial Council took
 Upon themselves the task. They found the Duke
At Memmingen in camp,—with messages of grace,
 They soften'd, as they might, their charge—
With hopes of favour, too. But what had taken place
 Friedland knew well, and long had fix'd his course,
 Southward he dared not march as yet his force.

For at the moment he was unprepared
 To drop the mask, and Seni, too, declared
The heavens were contrary, advised him to resign ;
 But in the not far distant future,
The Seer convinced him, planets would combine

To render him most glorious—in the skies
In greater brilliance would his star ascendant rise.

Therefore, though rage consumed him, not a trace
Of wrath or fury passing o'er his face
Betray'd the awful storm that rent his very soul.

The Councillors he there received
With countenance serene and well-disguised control,
And show'd to them on clearly mapped out page
A horoscope cast ready by the Sage.

"Ye can, my lords, herefrom most plainly see
I am for this your embassy prepared ;
Nor do I need that ye should bring me news
Of my disgrace. The Kaiser is betray'd—
Most woefully deceived ! But him I hold
Not culpable in this, towards me so great
Injustice—nay, I pity him, 'tis clear
My enemies dictated all to him,—
And that he now is dominated by
The schemes and haughty will of that Bavarian,
To whom my downfall justly I attribute.
But though I feel aggrieved that he doth fling
My used-up self aside, yet I will render
Obedience to His Majesty's command !"

No more he said, nor heard—the camp forsook
And to his wide estates himself betook ;
The Councillors, enrich'd, forth from his presence went :

He deemed that in the future they
Might be of use. Then to Vienna sent
He next an humble letter, so to save
If possible, his rank, the Kaiser's grace to crave.

Murmurs arose at once on every side,
Their great disgust the colonels did not hide :

By far the greater number, and the best,
 Tearing the Imperial commissions,
 Forthwith the service left ; while many of the rest
 Shared in their General's banishment, to wait
 His pleasure, and to swell the pride of his estate.

Others by pensions to his cause he bound,
 That they should not be missing when he found
 The stars auspicious—for 'twas strange this man,
 Who cared for neither God nor Devil,
 Believed in Seni's lore—and thus his present plan
 Was to bedazzle men by pomp and glitter,
 And render to himself the idle time less bitter.

Lavish in rich magnificence he dwelt
 At Prague, and at his country seats, and felt
 Proud satisfaction in eclipsing by his wealth
 His Sovereign's state and retinue,
 Ev'n in retirement and disgrace. And still, by stealth,
 He laid his schemes against the rising day,
 And carefully prepared his future way.

And Maximilian thus his triumph won !
 The Kaiser, too, well-pleased the thing was done,
 No ceremony made. He thought the Duke was crush'd,
 And therefore past consideration ;
 Aside his services conveniently were brush'd,
 Even all gratitude his Sovereign sank,
 And took away his honours and his rank.

But it was necessary now to find
 Another general for the troops combined
 Of Austria and the League. And this command both
 The Kaiser for his eldest son, [sought
 Bavaria's Grand-duke for himself ; but neither wrought

His hoped-for purpose, for a compromise
To settle the dispute the Diet tries.

Bavaria's general, Tilly, to forsake
His service, enter Austria's, and take
The vacant leadership which both the countries claim,
The Electors order, to allay
Their mounting jealousies. They number'd much the same
The army of the League, and Austria's, when
Friedland disbanded and dispers'd his men.

Some forty-thousand was the Austrian might,
Nor was the League's much less. In every fight
Had Tilly conquer'd, and his troops had gain'd thereby
The confidence of long success—
The proud reliance swell'd by years of victory.
Of Sweden's King, if he should dare invade,
With such a force they need not be afraid.

Now to the Kaiser news is duly sent,
"Gustavus has prepared his armament,"
And, laughing scornfully, he to Count Tilly turn'd
And said: "Another puny king
Will try conclusions. He whom Wallenstein once spurn'd,
And promised to whip forth from out the Realm
With rods alone, would now us all o'erwhelm!"

The courtiers join'd in jeering at the foe
Who threaten'd them: "His Majesty of Snow,"
They said, "requires the frost of northern clime to hold
His icy limbs congeal'd together.
Though firm enough, no doubt, in his bleak Sweden's cold,
Let him but come down south, he'll rue the day:
Our suns will thaw him, and he'll melt away!"

But Tilly did not laugh, nor join the jeer,
The courtiers' jesting grated on his ear ;
Not noble-minded, yet too good a soldier he,
An adversary to despise,
Ere he had measur'd well his full capacity,
And gauged his mettle on the battle day—
The lords astounded much now hear him say :

"The King of Sweden is no common foe—
Not only is he bold, but what is more,
He is as prudent ever as he's brave.
Now in the bloom of years and manhood's prime
His powerful frame is knit, and fully braced,
All hardships to endure, and he has learn'd—
A warrior from his youth—in war to gain
His victories, and through his victories
To wage successful war. Than him, I say,
I know no general who should more be dreaded !
Whate'er he wills, most readily the Estates
Of Sweden grant ; all ranks unite at once
Ev'n to anticipate his lightest wish.—
While his resources, too, are not to be
Despised, his measures are most capable !
Through his pre-eminent authority
He hath a veteran army, though compos'd
Of many varying nationalities,
Into one perfect whole together welded,
Through blind obedience to his discipline ;
So that he can as easily govern it
As he can guide his charger by the rein.
He is a player, to whom if nought were lost,
It were far greater honour even so,
Than 'twould be to win everything of others !"

While the Electors were in council seated,
Gustavus had his armaments completed,

Equipp'd for sea a fleet of thirty men-of-war,
 An army fifteen thousand strong.
Upon its dancing waves the ocean proudly bore
 Two hundred transports to convey across
 To German shores the veteran Swedish force.

Though small in numbers well was it selected,
None but his steadiest warriors were elected
To accompany their King, whose courage had been tried
 Full often in the Polish wars,
Whose discipline was proved in battle by his side:
 They were enough the campaign to begin,
And he was confident that they would win

While they were satisfied their King would show
What such a force well led could do—no foe
They felt could them resist, no general him they knew
 Could outmanœuvre or surpass.
What cared they though their numbers were but few,
 Their King was in himself a host indeed,
No battle could be lost while he was there to lead.

A somewhat smaller force, too, ready stands
In Prussia, under Oxenstiern's commands,
To take King Sigismund of Poland in the rear
 Should he renew hostilities
During the truce agreed. Against the fear
Of foreign raid upon his lands to guard,
He arms militia troops to keep good watch and ward.

Thus cared the Soldier for the Realm's defence—
The unselfish Hero show'd no less good sense,
As Monarch, for its weal. The Country's government
 He handed to the Council over,
The exchequer to his brother-in-law:—content

To lead his troops he sank authority,
His house in order set as one about to die.

And though his Queen Gustavus dearly loved,
His country had first claim, so he removed
From her all power and rule, for which he plainly saw
Her woman's mind was insufficient.
The King convened, ere he commenced the war,
The Estates,—and on the scene we fondly dwell,—
To bid them, it might be for ever, his farewell.

A solemn meeting! As his arms enfold
His little daughter, all around behold
The father in the King. They swore, four years ago,
Feadly to her as future Queen,
As she encradled lay,—and now, from all tears flow,
For Gustave asks to have that oath renewed—
And states the measures he would have pursued,

The Realm to govern in his absence; or,
In her minority,—if from the war
He never should return. Most touching was the scene :—
On one side stood a King adored
By all his subjects, who to them had ever been
A Hero idolised in every heart;
Who now to fight their battles must depart!

While on the other stood the Deputies
Of all the Realm, tears glist'ning in their eyes,
The Nobles, Pastors of the Swedish Lutheran Church,
Whose Faith their King must e'en defend,
It might be with his heart's best blood :—in vain we search
The annals of all historied time to see
A picture worthier Immortality!

The noble King himself was deeply moved
To find how dearly him his subjects loved;
In vain the Hero strove his feelings to restrain
 As round the hall his glance he cast;
And as he spoke none sought composure to maintain.
Their eyes were dimm'd before he scarce began;
But ere he ended tears in torrents ran.

“Not with light-hearted levity I go
Forth to this new, with danger teeming war;
Nor would I dare to rush upon my fate,
My subjects to great hardships to expose,
To serve my selfish ends. God is my Judge!
I war not for my pleasure, nor would fight
At all were it not forced upon me now.
Me in the persons of mine embassy
The Kaiser hath most ignominiously
Insulted, hath my foes against me arm'd,
And persecutes my brothers in the Faith,—
Which he would trample in the dust. His hand
Is stretch'd out for my Crown. The German States
Our succour in their dire extremity
Most urgently implore, and, if so be
The Almighty pleases, we will render them
Our utmost help!—

Full well know I the dangers
To which my life will be exposed. Myself
I never yet have spared, nor shall I now,—
And alway to escape I cannot hope!
Up to this present day the Almighty's power
Me, in a manner marvellous, hath guarded
In perils manifold; but still I feel
Within me that my life is dedicate,
And I shall fall at last for my dear Land,

Defending Sweden's freedom. You I leave
Behind to Heaven's protection; let your course
Be conscientious, upright, ever blameless,
So shall we meet again beyond the grave!

To you, my Councillors, I first address
Myself. May God enlighten and replenish
You with His wisdom, that ye ever may
Wisely advise my realms. You, valiant Nobles,
To His good Providence I, too, commend.
Continue still to prove yourselves descended
From those heroic Goths, whose valour flung
Low in the dust the soaring tyranny
Of ancient Rome. You, servants of the Church
In whose defence our armament adventures,
To unity and patience I admonish.
Be in yourselves examples of the virtues
Which ye to others preach, and ne'er abuse
The power entrusted you, nor alienate
My people's hearts from Truth. You, Deputies,
Both citizens and peasants, I do wish
For you Heaven's greatest blessings,—in return
For steadfast labour, smiling, bounteous harvests,
Barns overflowing with rich fruits of Earth,
And all the good this life affords. For all,
Both present here and absent, my good people,
To Heaven I speed my prayerful, tend'rest wishes.
To all I say farewell,—perhaps for ever!"

The embarkation with the dawn of day
Commenced at Elfnaben. At anchor lay
Transports and men-of-war. It was in truth a sight
Which drew down multitudes to view.
The like they ne'er might see again—a scene most bright
To all,—to some no more, for even there
Were sordid souls who but for self could care.

Yet they were but a fraction to the rest ;
The great majority were much impress'd.
Some, by the mighty risk their King Gustavus ran,
Some, for their country's honour, and
The welfare of dear friends afraid ;—but few the man
Himself, though much they loved him, understood ;—
'Twas not to be expected that they should.

Just as the Infinite, the human mind
Cannot approach to, even so we find
Among our mortal selves degrees of varying range
Of intellect and spirit's power :
Between the highest and the lowest, though 'tis strange
And unaccountable to us, there is
A gap impassable, at least, in this,

If in the future life 'twill still be so
Remaineth unrevealed,—we shall not know
On this side of the grave ;—but such exalted soul
As Gustave's, even there, methinks,
Can not be brought down to the level of the whole ;—
For Genius even there must soar above
The vulgar in those blissful realms of love.

Nor, either, can I think that all shall rise
Through death perfected, the inequalities
Sinking thereby which from each other mortals sever :
The meanest may at once perceive
The grandeur of self-sacrifice, which never
On earth they understood, and wing their flight
By due degrees, at length, to ampler, nobler height.

But by must endless ages doubtless roll
Ere they shall reach that nobleness of soul



The King, the first to land, knelt down upon the beach.

[To face page 117.]

Gustavus here on earth attain'd, in which long space
His spirit will have soar'd again
Beyond their knowledge. If, in that eternal race,
We, too, above the lower crowd would fly,
Upon this earth we must ourselves deny;

Must live, like him, a life for others' weal;
Like him must for our fellows' suffering feel,
But not feel merely, and in pity idle stand,
To aggravate their miseries
Condoling vainly,—nay, we must stretch out the hand
To help them, even at a heavy price:—
Gustavus gave his life a sacrifice!

For weeks the Swedish fleet lay there wind-bound
Before a favouring day and breeze were found,
They then set sail, and towards the end of June they reach
The island Rugen, off the coast.
The King, the first to land, knelt down upon the beach
To thank God for the passage safely made,
And beg He would vouchsafe throughout His aid.

To Usedom the fleet pass'd on from thence,
An island, part of Pomerania, whence
The Austrian garrisons and regiments fled
As soon as ever it appear'd.
The army disembark'd, at once Gustavus led
His troops in rapid march to Stettin's walls,
And on the aged Duke the Monarch straightway calls

The place to open to the Swedish arms.
The weak old man was filled with dire alarms
Of Austria's vengeance—sought to move the Swedish King
By senile tears and lamentations:
Gustavus could not brook such craven wavering,

He tried persuasion first the place to gain,
But spoke more roughly as he found it vain:—

“I come not as thy foe, I come thy friend;
Not with Pomerania nor the German Realm
Do I wage war, but with its enemies!
To me thy Dukedom shall be sacred trust,
And when the war is over, from my hands
Thou shalt receive it safely back—whom else
Canst thou entrust it to who 'd do as much?
Look at the footsteps of the Imperial troops,
See for thyself their track throughout thy land,
And then compare with ours in Usédom—
And choose thou mine, or else the Kaiser's friendship!
Thy capital deliver to his hand.
What then? Will he, think'st thou, treat it more gently
Than I, or wilt thou on my road a barrier
To victory dare to set? The case is urgent,—
Thou must determine, or thou wilt compel
Me to more violent measures to proceed!”

‘Alas!’ the old Duke cried, “must it then be
That I in mine old age shall live to see
Myself despised and my authority, my land
Laid waste, and given to another,
My palaces in flames!”—The choice on either hand
Seemed desperate to him—the Kaiser's wrath
Most fearful, were Gustavus driven forth.

And so he tried by pleading argument.
To turn the King. At last Gustavus sent
Him earnest word: “Cousin, methinks thou art too slow,
Pray hasten thy decision on;
Not Fabian policy is all delay I trow!”
“In God's name, enter then!” despairing, cried
The Duke. To justify his course he tried,

By writing word to Ferdinand that he
Yielded to force, having no remedy ;
Had he not Gustave's troops within the town received,
The King had battered down the gates.
This did not make his peace, and, much aggrieved,
He then embraced at last Gustavus' cause,
And Sweden safely held his lands throughout these wars.

Like him the Lutheran Princes all hung back,
Hesse excepted. Volunteers no lack,
However, crowded to the King : troops Mansfeld led
In former years, and Brunswick's too ;
Ev'n men and officers from Friedland's armies fed
The growing Swedish might, and every day
Saw greater numbers still upon the way.

Rudolph arrived in Stettin without loss
Of time, and with him came a gallant force
Of Nuernberg youths. The King, as Eric's friend, him bade
Right welcome, placed him on the staff ;
And Eric introduced him round, and quickly made
Him quite at home, and treated him as brother,
For such the youths considered one another.

For although Eric had not Hilda seen,
Some correspondence there had pass'd between
The lovers, ere the German shores he left.
Impulsive Hilda wrote her letter
As her sweet soul compelled her sorrowing heart bereft
Yet with a maiden's modesty she strove
How to convey her thanks, and not betray her love.

If ever she had really been in doubt
That she loved Eric, she her love found out

In that dread terror when her heart beat on his breast,
 When she her arms around him flung,
And felt that even death itself with him were blest.
 No longer more the maiden wooing needed,
 Since her own heart his suit effective pleaded.

If Hilda then succeeded in her letter
Her love to hide, to maidens, who know better
Than I all Love's affairs, I leave a point so fine,—
 I only know that Eric found,
Or deem'd he found, in every tell-tale line,
 What Hilda thought she had not written there,— [despair.
 Something which bade him hope and wholly quench'd

And so he wrote in answer fair and plain,
He saw at last that he his suit would gain,—
Pressed her to promise she would one day be his bride,
 To wait until the war was over.
'Twould surely not be long. Gustavus would decide,
He wrote, in victory Religion's right,
And triumph over Papal Austrian might.

The Magistrate and Hilda both replied ;
Her heart the maiden yielded ;—differing wide
From the gay, fairy girl whose mirthful, saucy mood
 The fond youth's heart had long bewitch'd,
She seemed to Eric grown to womanhood
In these two letters ;—he had never thought
So great a change could e'en by Love itself be wrought.

Her father wrote more briefly, simply said :
 "Eric, my son ! Pray God, before ye wed
'Twill not be long deferred ; for I myself would see,
 And I am now no longer young,
The joyful years in store for her, my lad, with thee,—

I wish you happiness with all my heart,—
May I be spared to bear therein my part!"

Not many letters passed; from Gustave's court
At Stockholm Eric all occasions sought
To forward messages of love; but they were few,
For in those anxious, troubled times .
Communication was most difficult. How true
That absence makes the heart but fonder grow!
Hilda and Eric now both found it so.

How eager then her letters to peruse—
How greedily now Eric hears the news
That Rudolph brings, what's passed since he was called away,
How Hilda and her father fare—
Can be imagined best: too short he found the day,
Though it was summer-time, for such delight:
The friends talked on till late into the night.

And still for days that followed while they lay
At Stettin idle—Conti barred the way,
Strongly entrenched at Garz upon the river Oder,
Holding the stream, and cutting off
From Stettin its supplies of fuel and of fodder,
And all its water traffic with the rest
Of Germany; such tactics being best.

No more effective course could he pursue,—
The troops that he commanded were too few
To risk a battle in the open with the King.
He hoped thereby to gain the time
That Tilly needed, ere together he could bring,
However much the new commander tried,
The forces scattered through the empire wide.

But to his own discomfiture he tries,
During the King's brief absence, to surprise
The town, whose mastery he cannot gain by force ;
The Swedes, however, are prepared,
And he is beaten back with heavy loss,
And can no longer even keep the field,
But must town after town to Gustave's army yield.

Damm, Stargard, Cammin, Wogast, quickly fell,
Gustavus captured Garz, Pyritz as well,
And Greifenhagen, on the Oder, won by storm :
From Pomerania Conti drove,
Who, as he fled, laid waste, illused with every form
Of cruelty the peasants on his road,
As ruined farms and smoking hamlets showed.

The winter came to add to his defeat
Its horrors ; for in vain he sought to treat
With Gustave for a truce and winter quarters.
The hardy Swedes still keep the field, [slaughters
Clad in their sheepskin coats, the while the fierce cold
The Southern soldiers, and the dread north wind :—
Disease and famine, too, their ranks more quickly thinned.

While cause they found to rue the devastation
That they themselves had made, scant consolation
Gustavus' answer gave : " We Swedes, in winter too,"
The warrior-king replied to them,
" In arms remain—soldiers we are the whole year through.
We want no armistice and grant no truce ;
We do not make the winter-time excuse

The plundered peasants to misuse still worse,
And prove in leisure even greater curse.

Do ye as ye think best, we shall not idle stand!"

Conti, on finding he could gain
No plunder more, threw up, disgusted, his command
Which he foresaw but to discomfort led:
His troops to Brandenburg retreating fled.

The conquering Swedes pursue, and round them close,
But Brandenburg's Elector, to their foes
Opening his fortress Kuestrin, bars the way
To Sweden's Monarch's full success:
But ill the Austrian troops this service do repay,
The Electorate straightway they overrun,
And spoil and plunder there, as they had ever done.

The starving soldiers had no other source
Of livelihood; since Wallenstein his force
Disbanded they no pay from Austria had received:
By theft and pillage now alone
In roaming bands they pressing want relieved.
Exactions first they raised, but not content [went.
With such mild measures long, from house to house they

They rummaged all the rooms for coin and plate,
Broke open doors and locks to violate
The women—even in the churches where they fled,
Hoping for sanctuary there,—
The men, who would resist they beat, and left for dead,
Tortured the old, to force them to disclose
Their hidden treasure, heaping blows on blows.

Nay, even that was not, alas! the worst,—
Old forms of cruelty these fiends accurst
Must needs revive, and torments new invent,
To wring the secret hiding-place
From aged victims' breasts; and often, too, they spent

Their more than demon cunning all in vain,
For death in pity stay'd the suffering victims' pain.

Old men before slow fires they dared to roast,
Old women, stript, were tight bound to a post,—
Exposed to winter's chill. But need I further tell
Atrocities, whose like would even shame
The foulest devils in the blackest depths of Hell?
Worse than the "Acts"* of the Inquisition dread,—
To crimes most frightful, lust and avarice led!

Once discipline to the four winds was thrown,
These human brutes obey'd nought but their own
Most beastly appetites, and savage, lustful will.
The officers resign'd command.
And now, all uncontroll'd, the barbarous wretches fill—
Rendering this war remember'd through all time—
The heap'd, o'erflowing measure of their crime.

The Brandenburgers to their Prince complain,
He to the Kaiser—but it is in vain:
The lawless soldiery pursue their course, and treat
The fated district worse and worse;
The Devil's reign itself can not with theirs compete!
Within this portion of the German land
Earth's foulest scum quite gain the upper hand.

At last the Prince, despairing of redress
From Ferdinand, directs in his distress
His subjects to hunt down, and slay like vermin, all
The roaming bands they find in arms.
The peasants answering the Elector's call,
Combine in self-defence, and strive to purge
Their suffering, wasted land from Austria's fearful scourge.

* Auto da Fè (Act of Faith).

Meanwhile Gustave had turn'd from Brandenburg
To drive the Imperialists from Mecklenburg:
And Tilly, pushing on, towards Frankfort march'd his force,
And at New Brandenburg surprised
A Swedish regiment. Savage at the loss
He there sustain'd, refused to grant them quarter,
The Swedes, to their last man, his furious soldiers slaughter.

But, finding Gustave's camp at Schwedt too strong,
The Austrian General did not tarry long,
Turn'd back to Magdeburg, so soon he had enroll'd
The remnant troops of Friedland's force,
The city to besiege; but Gustave, told
Of his departure, on the selfsame day
Moving his camp at once, to Frankfort takes his way;

The place he summons, and the siege begins,
And the third day the town by storm he wins.
The garrison, eight thousand ruthless men,
Who late had ravaged all the North,
For quarter vainly sue; the Swedes but answer then,
"New Brandenburg!" and put them to the sword;
Their hearts to mercy steel'd ev'n by their battle-word.

Gustavus then to Brandenburg again
Retraced his march, and once more he, in vain,
Call'd on the Elector to embrace the Lutheran war,
And join his troops with his to aid;
For Falkenberg, whom he had sent before
To hold the town, letters to him address'd
That Magdeburg was now by Tilly sorely press'd.

The King push'd on his army to Berlin,
Hoping that by his presence he might win

The Elector's confidence, and at an interview
Might gain perchance the alliance sought.
Although he could demand, he deign'd to sue.
Anxious the 'leaguer'd city to relieve,
He must security for safe retreat receive.

Spandau and Kuestrin both to garrison
And hold, till Magdeburg's relief was won,
Was all Gustavus ask'd: the towns he would restore,
He promised on his royal word;
Yet he was forced to use severe reproach before
The Elector yielded, with the worst of grace,
And even then the Cause would not embrace.

It happen'd at a feast the Elector gave,
At which he brooding sat, and to Gustave,
Who press'd him to decide, would answer scarce at all,
At last the Hero said in scorn,
"Thy silence doth not me surprise;—I call
For help in this, a matter of some weight,—
On my demand, perchance, may even hang thy fate!"

While yet the Elector, wavering, fear'd to take
A step that would an open rupture make
With Ferdinand, and bring down Tilly's neighbouring might
At once in vengeance on his land,—
To Mecklenburg, who sat beside him on his right,
Gustavus turn'd indignant,—forced to try
His last resource, and spoke with flashing eye:—

"My way now leads to Magdeburg, the siege
To raise, for thus at present can I render
The greatest service to the Lutheran Cause.
But, ere I go forth Tilly to encounter,
'Tis necessary I should make secure
Retreat behind me; and I dare not leave

These fortresses that might be closed against me—
(For what hath happen'd once, may well occur
Again, to mine and Sweden's disadvantage),—
Held by a garrison of doubtful friends.
'Tis not mine own advantage that I seek,
But thine, and all the other Lutheran Princes!
If then ye will not aid, but choose to set
All obstacles ye can upon my road,
I will proceed no further, but at once,
First making with your Kaiser an accord,—
Retrace my way to Stockholm. That the Kaiser
Is eager to conclude with me a peace
That would be all I could myself desire,
I know!—But ye,—how would ye fare, think you,
Were Magdeburg once taken, and were I
Return'd to Sweden?—Ye to God must answer,
Ye Protestants, that for the Lutheran Cause
Ye are afraid yourselves at all to venture!"

This threat to some extent, at length, succeeded,
The Elector yielded him one town he needed,
But one—to rally at in case of his defeat.

Spandau when occupied in force
By veteran Swedish troops, became a safe retreat;
And thus he had no more such cause to fear
Communications sever'd in his rear.

And Magdeburg he now push'd on to reach,
For Falkenberg sent message to beseech
His promptest aid. To the beleaguer'd town two ways
Stood open, one due west, which led
Straight to the city by a march of but few days,
Yet through a wasted land held by his foes
Who would his passage o'er the Elbe oppose.

The other led through Saxony, and pass'd
The Elbe at Dessau by a bridge : this last
Gustavus chose, and to the Elector John he sent
To ask for passage through his land.
The Elector he had thought would have assistance lent,
And furnish'd him supplies, of course for pay,—
But he refused, and even barr'd his way.

Not that the Elector John the Kaiser fear'd ;
For, from his after conduct, it appear'd
He thought that he was strong enough himself to play
A leading part. He dreaded more
Lest Gustave, too, at universal sway
Should aim, and thus his lesser light eclipse,
And dash the upraised cup, untasted, from his lips.

What Maximilian hoped by his intrigue
To gain in power as Leader of the League,
That, John of Saxony among the Lutherans thought
He could attain ; and now he saw,
In Gustave's victories, the happy chance he sought :
Let Austria Sweden fight, and treasure spend,—
And he would surely profit in the end :

As Leader of the Lutherans step in
Between the two exhausted, and thus win
Among the German Princes foremost place.
So he profess'd neutrality,
Refused to help, and still set strenuously his face
Against Gustavus' passage through his land.
The noble King could not such conduct understand.

These were the Princes who had sought his aid ;
It was vouchsafed, and some were now afraid,

Others unwilling, to embrace the Swedish side.
As yet no single State for him
Had openly declared. His patience sorely tried
By Protestants unworthy of the name,
The noble-hearted King might well exclaim:—

“Let then these Lutherans find their own destruction,
Since they will have it so! I will return
To Pomerania, and there wait till they
Call out aloud for me to come and rescue—
The yawning precipice before them seeing,
Which they, though them it threatens to engulf,
Wrapt in their selfish schemes, now, blind, ignore.
Good Heavens! how is it possible to see
Our neighbour's house in flames, and yet not haste
To quench the fire?—'tis past my comprehension!
And so it seems the fated town must fall,
And with it all that's left of German Freedom!”

His was the true nobility of mind
From the dull dross of selfishness refined,
Perfected by a life of self-denying love,
Through daily practice of a Faith
Grand in simplicity,—raised high above
The grovelling Creeds by Superstition weighted,
Trammell'd by Priestcraft's wiles, to Greed and Error mated.

The teachings of this Faith he understood,—
His life bore fruit thereto:—he thought he should,
Fruitful himself, find others fruitful too.
Prepared himself his blood to shed,
He deem'd that other men, at least, would something do.
No wonder then his lofty spirit grieves
To find, where he sought fruit, but barrenness and leaves.

The conduct of these Princes clearly proved
Their paltry, sordid souls were wide removed
From the grand spirit of the Faith that they profess'd,
Whose champions they call'd themselves.
Unselfishness they knew not, but their powers address'd
Each his own mean ambition's end to gain,
And to all else indifferent still remain.

Theirs be the blame! The precious time *they* waste!
Express upon express sent off in haste
The Elector urges to consent. While to and fro,
From camp to town, from town to camp,
Gustavus' messengers yet come and go,
Are brought the dreadful tidings,—'Tis too late!—
For ever seal'd, alas! is Magdeburg's sad fate.





BOOK IV.

The Storming and Destruction of Magdeburg.

THE sun had set in the western sky
Some hours ago; its slanting rays,
O'er mountain, wood, and river shed,
Had tinged them all with golden haze;
But they shine anew in lurid red,
And the western sky is still ablaze;
From the horizon streamers high
Up-shooting to the zenith soar.
Is it the Aurora? Ne'er before
Did Northern Lights such radiance pour,
In fiery flood, on mortal eye.
What means it then?—The horseman knows—
He spurs his steed to faster trot;
Although the night its shadows throws,
And the road is rough, he heeds it not.
Faster and faster still he goes,
His gaze is fix'd upon that spot
From whence the darting streamers fly,
Which seem the ruby to combine
With diamond's brilliant-flashing shine;
So bright and varied are the hues
That there the darkling heavens suffuse.

The morning long, upon his ear,
As he rode on, a rumbling broke
Like distant thunder; and though clear
The cloudless sky, a cloudlike smoke,
As oft he reach'd a higher crest,
Was plainly seen far in the west.
And when he stopp'd his headlong race
From time to time, for briefest space,
To stretch his stiffen'd limbs, and feed,
On the scant wayside grass, his steed,
He felt a trembling in the air;
Beneath him shakes the solid ground,
As on their breath the zephyrs bear
The mutter'd thunderings' distant sound.
Then snatches he his courser's rein,
Into the saddle vaults again;
And speeds upon his hurried ride,
Spurring his charger's blood-stain'd side:
'Tis plain to see his desperate need
He values higher than his steed.

But as the morn gives place to noon
The rumbling noises die away,
The night comes on for him too soon,
Nor doth his pace the rider stay.
For though the earth no longer shakes,
As in vibration from the stroke
Of Thor's fierce hammer—yet the smoke
Form more defined and denser takes;
And from its thicken'd volume rise,
Still higher mounting in the skies
(For now the wind in fury wakes)
Those ruby gleams of brilliant light
As soon as evening turns to night.
The road down in a hollow lies,



The hill-top gain'd, an awful sight
Lay spread before him,——

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And onward now for miles he hies
Through wooded glen, his view confined
 To patch of sky above his head,
 Across which, now and then, there sped
Flashes of light, whose bright gleams blind,
Like sudden lightning, man and horse.
Uphill more slowly climbs the course;
The wind roars loud—above its roar
 He hears a rushing mighty sound,
The like he ne'er had heard before,
 Causing his heart with dread to bound.

The hill-top gain'd, an awful sight
Lay spread before him, such as might
Appal the stoutest living heart.
 Aye, such as will the Dead appal
 When the Last Judgment trump shall call,
And they arise, and awestruck start
To see a world around in flame,
 Waiting their doom in dread amaze.
A scene that may such terrors claim
 Breaks forth at once on Eric's gaze,
As from the top he casts his eye
 Down on the plain stretch'd out below.
Like molten brass appears the sky,
 The earth one huge volcano glow,
From which the sparks in showers fly,
 To which red waves like lava flow.
The Elbe a fiery torrent pours
Full in that mouth of hell, which roars
But louder still more to receive.
Eric can scarce his sight believe;
Instinctively he checks his horse,
And stops spellbound, to gaze, perforce,
Upon the burning torrent red

That rolls within the river's bed,
And on the flames that mount on high,
As though to pierce the heavens intent,
Thinking therein to find a rent
Through which they may escape, and fly
To other worlds, where they can slake
Their withering rage and cruel thirst,
And even still more havoc make
In blessèd planets, not yet cursed
By sin, and misery, and war,
Where the flame-demon ne'er before
Has ventured, where in virgin field
His lust can run its riot race.
For never can this spent earth yield
Pleasure again to his embrace,
Since he, upon that awful night,
Sated his hellish appetite.

As, petrified, sat Eric there,
Still gazing with a stony stare,
His noble courser sniffed the air,
But moved no muscle; one had thought
They were a sculptured statue, wrought
In bronze, or fairest marble white,
According to the point of view,
Whether in shadow, or in light.

But presently the storm-wind blew
The flames and smoke his way: the sight,
So dazzling, scarce to be endured,
Was, in a moment, quite obscured
By veil of stifling vapour roll'd,
Enclosing all within its fold.
And rain of dust and ashes pour'd,
As from a sudden thundercloud,
Upon the earth, a whitening shroud.

Borne on the gale the flame-blast roar'd,
Uniting in one awful sound,
Screams, laughter, wails, and sighs profound;
One moment sunk to lowest note
Of deep-drawn anguish—agony,
Then shrieking as from demon's throat,
In mocking laughter, pealing high;
Yet not so loud to drown the cry,
Such as the damn'd might utter, when
(At close of life in crime misspent
Their souls are from their bodies rent)
They feel their torment's earliest pang.
These were the awful sounds that rang
In Eric's ears a space; and then,
As the wind lull'd, died fitfully
In wail prolong'd. The canopy
Of smoke dispersing, bursts anew
The blinding glare upon his view
Of that hell-furnace fed by men,
Fit torch their devil's work to light
Of greed and lust that awful night;
Again the Elbe its waters pours,
A flood of rushing liquid fire,
And loud the fiery torrent roars.
Again the flame-tongues leap still higher
To heaven's red vault,—raving to find
Still by its arch set bounds design'd.

Slowly the horseman onward rode,
No more occasion now for speed,
No longer cause to urge his steed;
The awful scene too plainly show'd
How fearful was the city's fate;
Alas, 'twas clear he came too late.
His message now could nought avail,

Gustavus' army could not save.
It but remain'd to bear the tale
Of Falkenberg's resistance brave,
And Magdeburg's despairing fight;
And tidings learn, as best he might
How it had happen'd that a town
Whose battlements with cannon frown,
Well fortified, with deep ditch round,—
A stronger hardly could be found
Within all Germany's wide bound,—
Held by a bold determined band
Of valiant burghers, to withstand
A siege prepared, sworn to repel,
To their last gasp, their Faith's dread foe,—
How such a powerful fortress fell.
But how find out the fault, or show
The means by which the place was won,
Was not so easy to be done!

Eric had pass'd this way before,
Since Tilly had commenced the siege,
Despatches then, as now, he bore
To Falkenberg; and to his Liege
The King, of progress of the war,
And Magdeburg's defence, had brought
On that occasion good report.
Its walls the burghers bravely hold,
The citizens are all enroll'd,
And Falkenberg sees nought to fear:
"The place will easily hold out
Till Gustave can himself draw near
And Tilly's forces put to rout;
From storm he could the town defend,
Yet Tilly surely would not dare
His men against the walls to send,

But if he did he would find there
At Magdeburg, the self-same fare
That Wallenstein at Stralsund found—
For anxious fear there was no ground."

But since that time the King received
Intelligence with evil fraught;
And Falkenberg was sorely grieved
Ere he had scarce a skirmish fought.
Unless the place were soon relieved,—
Unless Gustavus succour brought,
The burghers' zeal would melt away.
The richer men began to pay
For substitutes upon the wall
Their place to take; the hardships all,
Still heavier growing day by day,
Upon their poorer brethren fall.
Though they were ready free to spend
Their blood, the fortress to defend,
Yet Falkenberg could not depend
On watchfulness and discipline.
With constant toil their ardour lagg'd;
Their highflown spirits somewhat flagg'd;
And murmurs, too, arose within
The city, as, all driven in,
The soldiers from the foreposts dragg'd
The cannon back into the town.
And blacker looks and angrier frown
Appear'd when Tilly next burn'd down
The suburbs Falkenberg resign'd,
No longer able them to hold.
And, once within the walls confined,
More plainly still they spoke their mind;
And discontent grew yet more bold
Among the burgher bands enroll'd.

News of the King's approach again
Their waning zeal confirm'd, before
Out broke their murmurings in uproar.
With prospect of relief, once more

They burn'd the outposts to regain:
For martial glory all athirst,
They from the walls in sortie burst,
And for a time the foe dispersed,

Just as the sun breaks through the rain.
But gathering up from every side
As denser clouds his fierce beams hide,
So closed the foe on either hand
Upon the gallant burgher band,
And drove them back within the walls.

But yet so bravely had they fought,
The Austrians such a lesson taught,
That Tilly a war-council calls:

Fearing he might himself be caught
At disadvantage, even thought
To raise the siege, ere Gustave falls
Upon his trenches in the rear,
For well he knew the Swedes drew near.

The King had heard up to this date
Often and fully of the state
Of Magdeburg; but since then came
But scant report, and still the same
Urgent request for speedy aid.

And from his spies he also knew
Tilly his trenches closer drew,
And moved his batteries closer, too,
But that a breach he had not made.
For the town's safety much afraid,
He scarce could tell what best to do;
Against the Prince who stopp'd his course

The King were sorry to use force;
But yet should he much longer wait,
Until the Elector found his mind,
It might, perchance, be then too late,
The town have yielded to its fate.
A middle course he hoped to find,
Which the weak Prince could scarce resent.
Notice by messengers he sent
To John of Saxony, to say
That he would wait another day,
But longer dared he not delay.
On the third morn to march he meant.
If still the passage he denied,
And chose by arms to bar the way,
Then must the matter force decide,—
No more would he negotiate,
On speed hung now the city's fate,
His patience was too sorely tried.

Gustavus then for Eric sent,
Told him to ride that very day,
Explain'd to him his full intent;
To Falkenberg he bade him say:—
“Hold but the place a few days more,—
If one is made, defend the breach.
Within three days, or at most four,
Gustavus' army thee will reach.”
Thus, as the Monarch him had bidden,
Eric the whole night through had ridden,
And, as the day advanced, his steed
Had urged on still at greater speed,
When to his ear the wind had brought
The distant, muffled, low report;
And when, at eve, he saw the light
That up from the horizon burst,

The cloud by day was fire by night—

He then had cause to fear the worst
But the last lingering hope had fled,
Confirm'd was all his utmost dread
In the fierce blaze before him spread,
When he had climb'd the last hill-top
And saw, in shuddering amaze,
Disclosed to his half-blinded gaze,
The awful sight that made him stop,—
Drove back the blood through every vein
In horror to his heart again,
Where in too narrow compass pent,
In throbbing, thrilling flood it spent,
Rushing in circulation round,
The energy of its rebound.

Left to itself, his jaded steed,

Its trot to foot's pace quickly brought,
As, pondering how he now should speed,
Eric sat buried deep in thought.

His path, some ten miles from the town,
Leaving the road, ran steeply down
To the broad river Elbe below,
Rolling its waves in fiery glow.
Here, at the bottom of the hill,
Stood a half-ruin'd water-mill,
Deep in the wood, driven by a rill
That gush'd from out the steep hillside.

The miller was in Swedish pay,
And help'd the spies upon their way;
His loyalty had been well tried.

To show that everything was right,
The signal was a candle's light,
Shining in upper window bright

It was not safe to further go,
The outpost sentries of the foe
Eric at any time might find.

His plan had been to take the boat,
Leaving his horse with him behind,

And, favour'd by the night, to float
Down to the city's wall unseen.—
Such plan were useless now, I ween!

That signal Eric mark'd once more,
So he rode boldly to the door,

And lightly from the saddle sprung,
The miller's news to hear, before

He ventured onward. Hardly rung

His spurs upon the stones, than flung
Full length upon the ground he lay;
And jeeringly his captors say:—

“Gently, Sir Spy! ho, ho, Sir, soft,
Thou comest here this once too oft.
We have thee now, and so we ought,
For we have miss'd a rare day's sport.
Thy capture costs us much. The spoil
Of yonder flaming town we lose.
Its sack had recompensed the toil.

Our comrades will have glorious news
To tell of this day's lusty work;

And pretty booty, too, to show.

But we, in ambush forced to lurk,—

Nay, struggle wouldst thou! Oh, no, no,

'Tis bootless,—cannot let thee go,

For thou hast cost us far too dear;
So softly, 'tis no use, dost hear!”

Roughly they raise him from the ground,
And place him in his saddle, bound,
And then their ranks they close around,

And hem him in on every side.

Thus with their prisoner to the camp

They march with steady, measured tramp.

Close by the river's gleaming tide

The road is stretch'd some little way,

Contrasting, in its dusty grey,

With the bright waves and lurid sky,

Through which the flaming splinters fly,

As though the bursting earth flung back

Into the face of Heaven, a flame,

That should its vaunted lightnings shame,

With roar terrific—rending crack—

So fearful, thunder should not claim

Compared with it again the name.

Even the soldiers stop, and gaze

Upon that sudden, leaping blaze.

That pealing crash they hear with awe,

And, for the moment deafen'd, draw

Aside in cow'd and hush'd amaze.

None, not the oldest, ever saw

Such dreadful sight, or heard such sound.

While Eric in the scene forgot

The hopelessness of his sad lot—

Forgot he was a captive bound,

And, in the city's fearful fate,

Forgot the death that doth await

The spy, within the lines when found.

A soldier, speaking, broke the spell:

"'Twas, sure, the Townhall roof that fell!

See, what a vivid glare of light;

Comrades, it is an awful sight!"

They reach their goal, and Eric's thrown

Into a dungeon, dark and damp;

But even through the massive stone
The awful roar, subdued to moan,
Rings in his ears. He needs no lamp :
The pitchy darkness of the cell,
As black as any pictured hell,
Is better than that lightning glare
That human eyes can scarcely bear.
And ev'n the foul and noisome stench
Of poisonous gases (such as quench
Our vital spark, and taper's flame,
When in a denser volume found
In wells and caves within the ground—
For life and light are much the same)
Was not so stifling, although death
Lurk'd in the faint and sickly breath,
As the sulphureous vapours pour'd
From that vast blaze of blinding light.
Wearied, he fell asleep ; still roar'd,
Through troubled slumbers all the night,
Louder than ever earthly blast
When from the cloud the bolt is cast,
Unearthly thunders in his dreams.
Upon a tossing sea of fire
He is afloat, and then it seems
The red-hot billows mount yet higher,
And mingle with a flaming sky,
And scalding foam, and spray-showers fly,
Blown by the storm from every crest :
Upon this burning ocean's breast
For thousand, thousand years he sails ;
But it is boundless. Next he tries,
For he has power at will to rise,
Escape, by mounting through the skies—
For ages soars aloft, but fails.
Although the flaming clouds are rent

And yield him passage, still is spent
His flight in vain; above his head,
As dense as ever, yet is spread
The ever-blazing, thundering sky,
While still beneath him spray-storms fly,
And fiery waves, with iron's clash,
Upon each other seething dash,
Around him lurid lightnings flash.

Only one desperate course remains :
The sea is boundless, and the sky
He cannot pierce with all his pains—
Is there a bottom? He will try.
Through all eternity he sinks
Lower and lower in the sea
Of dazzling, liquid flame; he thinks
A bottom there at least must be.
It is unfathomable! A dread,
A sense that language fails to tell
Of sickening anguish,—hope is fled,—
Comes over him,—“This must be Hell!”
He shrieks, and with the shriek awakes;
And reason for a time forsakes
His puzzled brain. Where is he, where?
Plunged all at once from dazzling glare
Into the thickest, blackest gloom,
And the deep silence of the tomb,
Strange contrast to the mighty roar
Heard in his sleep, but just before.

Eric, untangling from his vision
Realities by slow degrees,
His waking mind from terrors frees
Woven in Dreamland. His position—

To him each hour may be his last,
Since in this dungeon he is cast
A spy—scarce yet distinct stands out,
Or how it was it came about:—
The hurried night and day's long ride,
The blazing town, the gleaming tide,
The sky of molten brass, the roar

Of the fierce oven's fearful blast,
The sense of dread and anguish sore
Never experienced before,—

Grandeur terrific, which at last,
The more his mind upon it dwelt,
Became o'erpowering, till he felt
The terrors of his dream were less.
Eternity of wretchedness
Might be endured; but such a sight,
As burst upon his gaze last night,
Those awful sounds that pierced his ear,
The flaming, seething atmosphere,—

Eternity of these *were* Hell.
That new-felt sense, that dread and fear,
No mortal tongue can fully tell.

He dozed again, for Youth is blest
In that it easy sinks to rest,
Even in misery; but Age

Must wakeful toss with load of care,
And spend as best it may its rage,

Must through the long night watches bear
Intensified its burden still,

For sleep no longer comes at will.

He slept, and, as he slept, his soul
Burst from the dungeon's close control,
And wing'd its way to Traubeneck.

In dreams he clasp'd in his embrace

Hilda—his own; upon his neck

She hung in rapture, on his face
Lavish'd her kisses; she was won,
The war was over, toil was done,
And he had come and claim'd his bride,
And found his heaven by Hilda's side.
But from this dream of earthly bliss,
Torn from her arms, her yet warm kiss,

A rude awakening waits him now :
The gaoler cries with fiendish hiss,
With sullen look, and lowering brow,
Grim in the torchlight :—" Friend, do thou—
There is thy morning meal,—prepare
To meet thy doom; among the dead,
Ere yet the passing day is sped,
Thou wilt be number'd. Dost thou care,
As cowards do, for soul's welfare,
'Twere best thy prayers were quickly said !"

How sweet is life ! What would we not
All sacrifice *it* to retain ?
However miserable our lot,
Shatter'd our health, and full of pain,
Our substance wasted, and the friend
Whom we deem'd faithful, faithless found,
Our plans brought swiftly to the ground.
Still even then we dread its end,
And still to life we fondly cling
As though it were a precious thing.
Judge then, yourselves, what Eric felt,
Eric, whose soul but lately dwelt
In perfect Paradise, whose dream
Might well of bliss a foretaste seem,
Omen of happiness on earth,
His cup of joy raised to his lips,

Then dash'd to fragments ere he sips
The nectar it contains. In dearth
Of water in the trackless waste
The traveller sees the miraged gleams
Of lakes expanded, running streams,
Lifegiving founts he cannot taste,
Shining like silver in the beams
Of torrid sun. The picture traced
So truthfully—let him but go
A few steps onward—empty show,
Phantom delusive proves. Ev'n so
Was Eric mock'd. Waked in alarms,
Torn from his heaven in Hilda's arms,
While yet his love he fondly press'd,
And she lay nestling on his breast,
While the sweet fragrance of her breath
Still linger'd, and the melting bliss
Hung on his lips of her last kiss
Given in rapture,—waked to death.

It was not that he fear'd to die:
He was a soldier, and the name
Of craven fear could never lie,
Ev'n for a moment, on his fame,
To blur his spotless knighthood's shield
With its foul rust and cankering spot;
But yet he felt how hard his lot,
Had he but fallen in the field,
Ere he had Hilda seen. But, shot!
Unburied in a ditch to lie!
It was a death that well might try
His courage to the utmost. Die
Like a dog! And then, when he was dead,
Was there a future life to dread?
What was the meaning of his dream?

Was there a warning in the gleam
Of that vast fiery flood, the abyss
Unfathomable, the boundless sea
And sky—both flaming? Could it be
He was debarr'd from future bliss?
The times were blinded: he had heard
That mysteries were oft declared
To those whose hours were nearly flown:
Was that his future? All alone
In that vast, limitless extent
Of seething, burning sea and air,
The only living creature there,
Must his Eternity be spent?
Must he of mercy quite despair?
Is Hell so vast that there is space
For the damn'd souls of every race,
Where countless millions are consign'd,
That of his fellows not a trace
Through all Eternity he'd find;
That on its awful solitude
No ray of comfort should intrude,
Not ev'n the sorry comfort found
In equal misery around?—
Was this true Christianity?
No, surely no, it could not be!

For if it were, far better creed
His Viking fathers firmly held,
That theirs, who for their country bleed,
Were Odin's glittering halls of eld.
It spurr'd them to heroic deed,
Their faith true nobleness compell'd
In a fierce age, since it the meed
Adjudged to merit, since it swell'd
The ranks of Valour, Virtue's bands,—

And 'twas a faith one understands.
At death the Soul to Judgment went
To give account of life here spent.
In awful majesty, on high
Sat the twelve Judges stern, to try
The Warrior's claim,—if, at their scale,
His deeds, thrown in the balance, fail
To turn the beam, the verdict pass'd
Condemns the Soul, from bliss outcast,
To wander from the joyous halls
Where suffering evermore has ceased,
Where never note of discord falls,
Where the true Heroes happy feast.
To flowing music's sweetest streams
Their grand adventures they recite,
Reclining in the eternal beams
Of sunshine's never-dying light.
By Odin's side they pass the hours
In feast and song, and crown'd with flowers.
Ripples of sound the harps strike up,
Upon the board the golden cup,
Fill'd with a wine celestial, stands,
Replenish'd still by maiden bands.
'Tis Heaven complete. With youth restored
A lustrous beauty is outpour'd
Upon each aged warrior's face,
Removed is suffering's every trace,
His stiffen'd limbs attain a grace
Unknown below, His own true love,
In virgin glory, maiden pride,
Fresh as he won her first his bride,
He weds again in bliss above.
In raptures, on Love's swelling tide
They speed the happy years away,
More perfect growing day by day.

Such were the thoughts flash'd through his brain,
Adding yet more to Eric's pain.
Such thoughts as these must needs beget
Within his breast a sore regret.

Oh, how he wish'd the tale were true.

Though many virtues, hard-wrought task,
From trembling souls the Judges ask,
Yet there were noble deeds a few
Sufficient in themselves to claim
Unchallenged right to Hero's name.

And one—his own—would turn the scale :

Who for his Faith and Country bled,
Who for his King his life-blood shed,
By that alone made up the tale
Of many virtues, nor could fail,

By his one deed, 'twas ever said,
To pass from that tribunal dread ;
Before the Judges would not quail,
But claim his own, the Hero's seat,
All virtues in that one complete.

Oh, were it true! then would he die
His shameful death most joyfully,
Aye, thousand deaths for such a prize.
It may be true,—must he despise
The simple faith the Vikings held,

Because of its simplicity,
Because no hidden doctrines well'd,
In waves of eccentricity,
By blasts of error ever swell'd,
From the dark, troubled, stormy sea
Of speculation's idiocy.

Because in it the schoolman's mind
No scope for argument could find,
Because the meanest intellect

Could grasp it, should it lack respect?
Because it needs no priest to teach,
In swelling phrase, pedantic sound,
Ornate, with flowing periods bound,
Dark dogmas, that can never reach
The people's hearts, for what they preach
Scarce stands upon a solid ground.
Their people plainly can perceive
That they themselves it scarce believe.
Eric was Christian, yet it seem'd
A ray of Truth, though dimly beam'd
In the bold Norseman's simple creed,
That Valour, Virtue, have their meed
Of feast, and song, and endless love,
Even in Heaven's blest realms above.

"It must be true!—It is, it is!"
He cried, "A Heaven, a Heaven of bliss
Surely awaits us, though we miss
The consummation of our joy
Here on the earth,—that Heaven shall buoy
My courage even now in this
Dread hour of death, and Hilda's kiss,
Where youthful loves shall never cloy,
Where happiness without alloy
Shall everlasting hours employ,
My Hilda's kiss in Dreamland given
Her Eric will return in Heaven!"

With bounding step and radiant face,
With happy and unclouded brow,
A lover to his bride's embrace,
Walks Eric 'twixt the soldiers now,
Who marvel greatly as they mark
His lofty port, courageous mien,

No faltering trace of fear is seen
In his proud bearing,—not the dark
And sullen courage of despair,
Nor is bravado's spirit there.
Nay! it is Love that fires the spark
That shines so brightly in his eye.
Composedly he moves along,
Nor ever heaves a single sigh,
Nor pales his cheek,—his pulse is strong,
Nor fetches ev'n a deeper breath,
Although he is led out to death.

The air is still, no longer roar
The thunders of the night before,
And spent is now the awful blaze,—
Only the smouldering ashes smoke.
Calmly the peaceful morning broke.
But Eric marks it not: his gaze
Is fix'd upon the distant hills,
Forgetful of his present ills,
His pending fate he does not reck:
Beyond their distant outlines blue,
Far to the south, lies Traubeneck,
He wonder'd whether Hilda knew
Aught of his peril, if 'twas true
True lovers' souls communion hold,
Ev'n here on earth, as it was told.
When danger threatens, or when death
Impends, they may. With his last breath
He'd utter her dear name, and die
Content; his soul released should fly
Swift to her presence and afford
Her comfort, evil from her ward,
And, ever watching, patient wait
The time when she should enter through

The portals of the golden gate
To Paradise,—then, entering too,
He there would claim her for his bride,
Nor taste of Heaven till, at his side,
Its glories burst upon her sight;
So would its joys be multiplied
Ten-thousandfold, and magnified,
If that were possible, delight.
Together in a joyful flight
Of rapture most intensified,
In bliss they 'd soar through realms of light,
Through Heavens of Heavens,—and each more bright.

The sad procession's mournful tramp
Had traversed now full half the camp,
With arms presented, beating drum,
Before the General's tent they come:
They enter, Eric Tilly sees,
Veteran of many victories.
The soldier's interest awakes,
And mental note he calmly takes
Of the appearance of the man,
Who, since his first career began,
Through a long course of battles ran,
The conqueror of every foe,
Some thirty glorious fields to show;
The greatest Captain of his day,
His talent no one could gainsay.
The General's frame was small, and spare,
But large in bone, and muscular;
His deep-set eyes shot forth a glare,
The stern and fiery light of war;
His cheeks were sunken, and his brow
Furrow'd with many wrinkles deep;
Careworn he look'd, as if his sleep

Refresh'd him not, and even now,
In the full tide of his success,
An aspect wore of wretchedness.
And he had cause, all must allow,
For gloom, which, since that fatal day
Of Magdeburg ne'er pass'd away.
Held in the grip of fierce remorse,
His spirit lack'd its wonted force,
And never more regain'd the sway
Till then establish'd over fate
And adverse circumstance. He seem'd
By the oppression of a weight
Of misery borne down, though gleam'd
Through fitful glance of brooding ire
Still in his eye his genius' fire.

"Is this the youth?" the General said.
"Thy life is forfeit as a spy,
Young man, according to the law
Which ever holdeth good in war.
Thy guilt is clear, and thou must die!
When thou to us wast captured brought,
Upon thy person there were found
Letters from Sweden's King, which taught
Full plainly that the purpose sought
Was to break through our lines around
The 'leaguer'd town. An ounce of lead,
As thou must know, or else the cord,
Hath ever been the spy's reward!
What hast thou then, young man, to plead
That I thy death-doom should not speed?"
"I knew," said Eric, "that my life
Was forfeit; that the penalty
Was death, if taken, and to die
I am prepared, and in this strife

Am well content my blood to shed,
And for my King and Faith to fall!"
"Thou wilt do well to tell me all!
Thou'rt Captain on Gustavus' staff,—
The letters both thy rank betray,
And name as well,—and I were half
Inclined to send thee safe away;
But if thou nothing more wilt say,
Thy blood must lie on thine own head!"
"I am prepared, since die I must,
To die. Nor would I, craven, thrust
Myself upon thy clemency;
But I have nothing more to tell,
Mine errand thou now knowest well.
I only grieve I may not die
Upon the field of victory,—
My life may not more dearly sell.
Yet, though a shameful death, the spy
Hath often for his country bled!"

Whether it was his radiant face,
Whether it was the youthful grace
Of Eric's bearing, without trace
Of fear or faltering, as he stood
Between the soldiers calmly there,—
Whether it was the quiet air
Which plainly show'd he would make good
His words in death, touch'd Tilly's heart,
Finding therein its softer part;—
Or whether, as historians state,
That Magdeburg's dread, awful fate,
Those fearful sounds, that horrid glare,
Had planted seeds of anguish there
Within the bigot victor's breast,
To ripen, in remorse, a crop

Of misery that gave no rest,
A constant gnawing without stop,
Or moment's ease,—I cannot say.
The dread events of yesterday
At least were fresh in Tilly's mind ;
In further bloodshed he would find,
We well may think, no more delight.
He was a soldier,—it might be
That soldier's bearing in his sight
Found favour ;—he were loath to blight
The budding promise he could see
In Eric, though an enemy ;
Nor cared with frost of death to doom
In life's glad spring such youthful bloom :—
Some space he spoke not, wrapt in gloom.

When he at length look'd up, he said,—
“ The town is taken, stands no more,
And Falkenberg himself is dead ;
Such is the fortune aye of war !
Well,—there is then, at least, no need
That I should hang or shoot thee now ;
Nay, it may be that it will speed
Our cause, if thee I life allow.
When I the city enter, thou
Shalt ride in too, and thus shalt see,
With thine own eyes, the fate in store
For towns that aid the Lutheran war,
When captured, what the penalty ;—
Like Magdeburg shall all such fare !
Of what thou see'st, prithee, bear
Back to thy King a full report,
For he should know the misery brought
By Lutheran rebels on the land,
And not encourage to withstand

The Kaiser's power with impious hand,
The Kaiser's just authority.
On him responsibility
For this proud city's sack and brand
Must rest through all Eternity!

"Two sieges hath the old world known,
In story stand out two alone,
This is the third—and all must own
That Magdeburg more awful name
Down the slow lapse of time will bear
Than Troy,—nor can Jerusalem claim,
Since yesterday, peculiar fame

For storm's atrocities,—for there,
When yonder smoking heap was won,
All former horrors were outdone!
In the brief space of one short day
Were crowded then—what shall I say?
The horrors of a century?

A century were far too short,
The dread atrocities there wrought,
Ev'n to enumerate!—But we
Are now to desperate measures brought,
And must stamp out this heresy
At any cost; and if it be,
That when a town is won by storm,
Man's worse than beastly passions form
A scene that may ev'n Hell impress,
A scene of riot and excess,
Inhuman, devilish,—then the blame
Of the foul outburst, and the guilt
Of the blood torrents wanton spilt,
Of reeking lust that bringeth shame
Upon the soldier's noble name,
On reputation slowly built—

That blame, I say, upon them fall,
Theirs be the guilt, who instigate
These heretics to rise, and call
Rebellion holy, just, and great,—
But not the General's, from whose hands
The reins controlling slip, whose bands
Spurn discipline when once a town
By storm is carried, batter'd down
Its walls and gates, and crown'd the breach!—
All sieges this same lesson teach—
The General loses then his sway,
And discipline is cast away,
For Lust and Rapine gain the day."

He ceased, their presence heeded not ;
Upon the ground his look was cast,
The present he, it seem'd, forgot
In the black memory of the past :
More to himself he spoke, as though
Accusing conscience he would still
With argument, and sought to show
That he was guiltless. If we will,
How easily of deeds of ill
Can we ourselves excuse, deceive,
Until at last we ev'n believe
We held in them no part at all ;
On others shall our judgment fall.
The very crime that we in them
Abhor, and hasten to condemn,
Vaunting superior sanctity,
When we commit we cannot see.
In us it is a fault at most,
And but a little one ; the sense
Of its enormity is lost
Since *we* transgress'd, and reason forced

Into the by-ways of pretence,
And used hypocrisy as fence,
As cover for our secret sin,
Still fair without, if foul within.

Just so the small accusing voice
Of conscience Tilly quickly still'd,
At the brimm'd measures could rejoice
That smiling Fortune ever fill'd
For him with glory and success.
He reck'd but little the distress,
The misery and wretchedness,
Inflicted on the human race.
What though each forward step its trace
Of blood and ruin left behind,
It matter'd not, he still must stride
Onward in his career of pride,
Conquests and victories to find.
Not that he worshipp'd wealth or power,
To fame alone was he enslaved,
'Twas martial glory that he craved,
Nought else he cared for. In the hour
When first he suffer'd then defeat,
When reason hardly held its seat,
So heavy was the staggering blow
False Fortune dealt that Conscience woke,
Plainly her power o'er him to show,—
He scarce recover'd from the stroke.
But that was still to come; as yet
Remorse could only slightly fret;
No lasting impress on his mind
Could melancholy leave behind:
He found it easy to repel
Its charge,—nay, had he not done well?
Were they not heretics, on whom

Humanity were thrown away?
He had but carried out the doom
That Rome decreed. Was not that day
A day of triumph for her cause,
The crowning glory of her wars?
Rome would not deem his work a crime,
But celebrate throughout all time
That joyful day with chant and rhyme.

His conscience, thus out-argued, slept,
Self-confidence regain'd its sway;
His evil genius closer crept,
His guardian angel turn'd away,
His influence lost, and doubtless wept,
If angels weep, and who can say
They do not, when they sorrowing see
Another opportunity
Of grace neglected, which may be,
The day of mercy speeding fast,
Perchance the last, the very last?

"Take him away," said Tilly, then,
"Keep him a prisoner on parole
Fitting his birth and rank; and when
I enter let him view the whole.
He may see all there is to see,
And, having seen, again go free!"
Eric could scarce believe he heard
The General right; by not a word
Could he express his thanks aloud.
He felt a choking in his throat,
And utter'd not a single note:
His gratitude he simply bow'd.
He 'd nerved himself to die, but now,
The peril past, upon his brow

Broke out a cold and clammy sweat,
And hardly had he felt as yet
How sweet was life,—how bitter death.
His senses reel'd; in gasps his breath
Came fitfully, and though he walk'd
Mechanically where they led,

Nothing he heard of what was said,
Nor answer'd as the soldiers talk'd.

No longer proud erect his head,
Weary he felt, and sick, and faint;
For sore fatigue and gaseous taint
Of loathsome dungeon told at length;
And now at last his youthful strength
Was scarce sufficient to sustain

His faltering steps, till, almost spent,
But just in time, their goal they gain

And he is usher'd to a tent
To prisoners on parole assign'd.
Here, over-glad indeed to find
An opportunity of rest,
His couch of straw he grateful press'd,
Which softer seem'd than eider bed.
Upon a stone he laid his head,
And soon in sleep his faintness fled.

He slept some time, but when he woke

He found the tent not tenantless:

An old man, plunged in deep distress,
Whose very heart-strings all seemed broke,
He saw before him, and a youth

Who strove to soothe the old man's grief.

"Regrets are idle, and, forsooth,

Vain sorrow can bring no relief!

Father, bear up!" the young man said,

"It is no use to wail the dead—

Their lot is happier far than ours ;
But let us dedicate the powers
Still left us to avenge their fate !

What though my gallant brother fell,
His noble death became him well—
It was a hero's, truly great.

Throughout all Germany they'll tell
How Eustace died ! When at the Gate
Fell back the bravest, there he stay'd,
Dauntless, amid the balls and smoke.
Though tongues of fire around him play'd
He flinch'd not, but with swinging stroke,
From left to right, his dripping blade
Swept in half-circles, while our foes
Drew back in fear, and dared not close.
He rallied us, and at our head
Charged fiercely, and the cowards fled.
Oh ! had we burghers every one
Bravely, like him, our duty done,
Then never had the town been won !

“ Weep not for him ! Thou hast no cause ;
Nor will I weep, though well I might,
That I was not ordain'd to fall
With him, but have outlived the fight,
And vainly now to Heaven must call
To vindicate its outraged laws,
For vengeance that I could not take.
Oh, dearest ! for thine own sweet sake,
My love, how gladly had I died !
I saw thee bleeding, from my side
Torn by the ravisher's fell hand,
Held by those demons. Forced to stand,
I could not succour thee oppress ;
I saw my babe, snatch'd from thy breast,

Dash'd on the pavement. Oh ! my love,
Can such things be? Is there above
A Being who hath all control,
And suffers yet such demon deeds?
I heard thy cries for help; my soul,
Pierced by thy shriek of anguish, bleeds,
Thy death-scream cries for vengeance still,
And cries in vain. But, love, I will,—
Though Heaven may not—avenge thee—I.
Ay, I give thanks I did not die,
And bless the wretches whom I curst,
Who saved my life through lust of gold
And hope of ransom! 'Tis the worst,
Most piteous tale that e'er was told;
But, love, an hundred, thousand fold,
Will I avenge thee; and, when done,
Vengeance shall be again begun!
Foremost in every field shall flash
My sword! Above the thunder-crash,
Above the tumult of the war,
Above the cannon's booming roar,
Shall spur me on thy piercing cry,
Till thou'rt avenged I will not die!
From henceforth this shall be my creed,
Though thousands shall around me bleed
I'll bear a charmed life, the spell
Not Heaven itself, nor banded Hell,—
That Hell that leagued it with their deed—
Shall break! And, even if my life
Shorter than vengeance prove, my soul,
Some other clay, to wage the strife,
Shall animate, until the whole,
Full tale of vengeance is complete!
While Pope or Priest still holdeth sway,
Trampling us Lutherans under feet,
So long shall last my vengeance-day!

"Oh! had his word the Swedish King,
That he himself would come, but kept,
To Magdeburg his army bring
To our relief"—Up Eric leapt
And interrupted quickly: "Friend!
I am a Swede, and own as Liege,
For whom my heart's last drop I'd spend,
My King Gustavus. He, the siege
Some weeks ago had raised, had he
Not by the Electors thwarted been,
Our banners Magdeburg had seen!
Allowance for thy misery
I make, but yet it may not be
My King should be reviled, I ween!
Had I, at other time, but heard
In question called his royal word,
The slanderer myself had sought,
And, either speedy lesson taught,
Or fallen at his hand; but now
'Tis clear thy grief is such, that thou
Canst scarce thy reason's sense declare.
But tell me, friend, since thou wert there,
How was it that the city fell?
Of Falkenberg what canst thou tell?"

"I meant not, Sir, to give offence,
Nor thought my words convey'd a sense
In aught insulting. Well I know
Thy King unsullied shield can show;
That never can dishonour stain
The royal Gustave's spotless fame.
And I were sorry, too, to pain
A gallant soldier who can claim
A part in Sweden's glorious wars,
Fought to uphold the Lutheran Cause,—

And Sweden's King alone can save
Us Lutherans now. Let me then crave
Forgiveness for my frenzied blame,
Unjust to his unselfish name;—
And I will strive ev'n to forget,
For a short time, my crying woes,
To my fierce anguish bounds will set,
Nor vainly nourish now regret,
But freely all I know disclose,—
How our fair Magdeburg was lost,—
How Pappenheim an entrance forced.

“It happened thus:—Two days ago
The heavy Austrian cannonade
Was silenced suddenly, although
No breach the enemy had made;
A tower had fall'n, but not below
Into the ditch, their task to aid
By forming passage for the foe;
To assault they seem'd as yet afraid:
And, Gustave nearing, they began
To move their batteries, and ran
Out from their trenches' beaten track
The foremost guns much further back.
Although we burghers, through a lack
Of powder, could not press their rear,
Nor stay their movements, yet all fear
For our town's safety vanish'd then.
We thought the Swedes at last were near,
That Tilly drew off all his men.
And when, a second time, he sent,
His trumpet summons to present
Demand for Magdeburg's surrender,
And easier terms to us to tender,
Only to make still more secure

Our confidence—we then felt sure
The dreary siege was nearly done,
Felt certain that the morrow's sun
Would gild the advancing helms and spears
Of Gustave's conquering array :
E'en timid women put away—
And gentle maidens—all their fears.
They little thought what heart-wrung tears
Of anguish—cries of dread dismay—
The sun would set upon that day.

“All night our pickets watchful kept
Their wonted posts upon the walls ;
A brooding, sullen silence slept
Within the Austrian lines, nor falls
At all upon the watcher's ear
The usual hum or clash of war ;
The air is hush'd, no foe is near,
Even the cannon's echoing roar
Since mid-day has been heard no more.
Great vigilance is still maintain'd
The short night through :—it might be feign'd,
Thought Falkenberg, this sudden quiet,
And but the prelude to storm's riot,
The din and terrors of assault.
But when the sun shot through the vault
Of heaven his all-enlightening ray,
And night gave place to glorious day,
Dawning so clear and still and calm,
Bearing sweet scents and breathing balm,
With all the freshness of glad May,—
And hours sped on with no alarm,
The wearied burghers dropt away,
By twos and threes, to rest and sleep,
Leaving but few the walls to keep ;

So fully were they then assured
The city's safety was secured.
But on a sudden there arose
A cry: 'The ramparts swarm with foes!'
And shots were heard, and wilder grew
The noise and tumult.—T'was too true!

"Scenes follow of confusion dire,
For all is unprepared. The bell
Rings out the alarm, and musket-fire,
The fearful truth, and tumult tell.
Half-clothed, to arms the burghers rush,
All order losing in the crush,
Back Falkenberg, who hard had striven
With gallant few, to still make head,
Whom he against the foe had led,
Was by o'erpowering numbers driven;
Yet, undismay'd, he quickly threw
Fresh troops upon the foe anew,
And bore them back right through the gate,—
Had even now regain'd the day,
But he succumb'd to hostile fate,—
Struck by a ball he wounded lay,
His life-blood ebbing fast away.
The advantage gain'd was quickly lost;
Two other gates the Austrians forced.
Not now alone with Pappenheim
Must the distracted town contend,
The burghers must their rear defend
'Gainst Tilly, at the very time,
While through their ranks the panic ran,
They fell back wavering at the van.

"With news of Falkenberg's sad death,
To us who had our gate regain'd,

Arrived a runner, out of breath,
To say the assault was only feign'd
On that side, but slight hope remain'd.
The new town Pappenheim had won,
Our cause already was undone;
No chance was left, unless were found
A leader who could rally round
Himself the boldest spirits there,
To fight the fight of grim despair—
All who would bravely do and dare
What flesh and blood can dare and do.
'Twas then that Eustace spoke: 'We're few,
Neighbours and friends,' my brother said,
'But word that Falkenberg is dead
Is brought, and that the townsmen fly.
Come then and follow me, and try
Fresh courage in our ranks t' infuse,
And drive the foe outside again,
All who, with me, would rather choose
Death than defeat,—we may regain,
Who knows, the town; we can but die,—
On then to death or victory!'

"He said, and waited not to see
How many follow'd, or how few,
Too great was the extremity,
The need too pressing, well he knew,
To ponder o'er the remedy.
Swiftly across the town we flew,
Loudly our single trumpet blew,
As headlong on the foe we threw
Our scanty numbers, with the cry,
'Burghers! a rescue! Townsmen stand,
We yet shall gain the upper hand
For Magdeburg. The Austrians fly!'

Deep in among the foes his brand
Hews a broad lane; the coward band
Wait not our onset. Break or die
Seems to the foe the only choice,—
They break. Above the din his voice
Loud cheers us on. From every side
Press numbers on in whelming tide,
Surrounding us; before, behind,
Fierce waves of foemen swell, but find
A stubborn rock that stands at bay,
On which they spend their might in vain,
'Gainst which they fret and chafe and strain—
From which hurl'd back they waste away;
Just as the breaking wave in rain
Of frothing foam and driven spray,
Thrown backward from the cliff is toss'd,
Its force of massy volume lost.

“Upon the struggling, surging mass,
The rallied burghers, sword in hand,
Rush in; the Austrians fall like grass
Before the mower's scythe. His band
Brave Eustace leads on to the gate,
Driving the foe before in flight,
While those behind all find their fate,
Borne down by the outnumbering might
Of citizens, who hurry down
From every quarter of the town.
More furious now the battle grew,—
The gate is gain'd,—the gallant few
Have saved the town,—Oh, were it true!—
But see! the foe without re-form,
Charge in upon the gate in storm,
And carry it by force anew.

We fall back slowly, inch by inch,
But Eustace only does not flinch,
Firmly he stands like statued stone,
And for a time he stands alone—
Alone, and yet maintains his own!
His back against the wall he placed,
And fiercely smote the foes he faced.
For very shame we could not fly,
And leave him there alone to die.

We rallied for a charge forlorn,
With scarce a hope of victory;
A third time on that fateful morn,
The storming foe is backward borne,
And Eustace, foremost leading, won
Yet once again the batter'd gate:—
His bold career, alas! is run,

O'ertakes him now at length his fate,
And my brave hero-brother falls,
Struck through the heart from off the walls,
Where Austrian marksmen take their stand,
And ply their shot on us below.

His death discourages our band,
But with fresh heart inspires the foe.
Fierce and more fierce the onsets grew;
Unceasingly the Austrians threw
Whole régiments on our wasted line;

Still stubbornly, and foot by foot,
The narrow gateway we dispute,
Careless of flying shot, and mine
Sprung by the foe beneath the wall:
Though upheaved stones and splinters fall,
Dealing a shower of death around,
We still fight on, although the ground
Is trodden into bloody slime.

Half blinded by the powder-flash,

And deafen'd by the thunder-crash,
To think of flight we have no time,—
Though smoke and sweat our eyes begrime,
Though every man among us bleeds,
No one his wounds or faintness heeds ;
Weary and spent, and wanting breath,
Encompass'd round with present death,
Hopeless our fight, we know, yet strain
Each quivering muscle to maintain
Our desperate post. It cannot last !
Fresh foes in streams still press in fast :
By multitudes we're overborne,
By their fierce onrush swept away,
As earthen sea-dam might be torn
And burst, upon a stormy day.
When through the rent the whelming tide,
Pent up till then, is scatter'd wide,
Flooding at once the fertile land,
Rolling its wave's resistless force,
'Tis vain its fury to withstand,
Or strive e'en to control its course ;
The foaming billows seethe and toss,
Rushing in angry, headlong race,
And in a moment fill the space.
So, in a moment, beaten down .
Is our defence,—into the town
The living torrents surging rush :
The remnant of our band is swept,
Broken and scatter'd in the crush,
And the last barrier is o'erleapt.
Then savage passions' boiling flood
In deluge bursts through every street,
And Magdeburg is bathed in blood—
Her tale of misery is complete !

No, not complete, worse horrors still
Must even follow, ere the fill

Of misery home to us is brought.
The demon Kroats their savage will,
Walloons, in all save crime untaught,
Let loose, their foul desires fulfil

Now discipline is set at nought.
Raging in lust and slaughter come
Fierce Spaniards, and the vilest scum
Of Italy and every land.

The town ere long is one vast brand,
One awful charnel-house, and worse—
Alas! that I can only curse,
But not avenge. Their deeds were those
The human tongue can not disclose—
Unutterable—the human mind

Cannot imagine. Ne'er before
Have like enormities mankind
Disgraced—nay even devils' war
Were not by such foul scenes accurst!
But this is Christian, and its worst—
Its crying horrors—have no name!
Language, for crimes at all the same
As these, must awful words invent;
In vain would all its force be spent,
For never can sufficient sound
Of horrid volume e'er be found,
Which shall one-millionth part convey,
Ere Heaven and Earth shall pass away,
Of deeds of darkness done that day.

“Though I can not describe the worst,
Black deeds at all, since language fails,
More than I would, I can. They burst,
Those wretches with a cry that hails

Of peace, and gladness, and goodwill,
Into our houses,—that cry still
Rings in my ears, will ever ring.
‘Jesu Maria—Virgin’s Son!’
They shouted, as the town they won,—
A name that should communion bring,
And Christian peoples all unite.
But now, alas! that holy cry
Is made the watchword of the fight—
Lust’s password to Man’s devilry!
Forcing the doors, at once they smite
Defenders down, and slay outright
All who, in vain, resistance try;
And they at least are spared the sight,
Wishing in vain that they might die,
Of ravish’d dear ones’ agony.
At once foul scenes commence—the son
Must see his white-haired father done
Slowly to death before his eyes.
In vain the wife to husband flies;
In vain, in vain, the father tries
Daughters—the husband, wife, to save,—
But I can not go on, I rave
At the mere memory of my wrong;
Nor can I that fell scene prolong.
I feel I shall at length go mad!
To save thee I had died, too glad,
My love! thy fate, so sad, so sad!”

“My friend,” said Eric, “for to me
Henceforth a friend thou e’er wilt be,
For thee, in truth, my heart doth bleed,
Thy woes partaking. Though a Swede,
I love a gentle German maid!
Until this day—war as a trade

And pastime I have look'd upon ;
Honour and glory spurr'd me on,
And bold adventure ; but, by Heaven !
All lust of glory shall be driven,
From this day forth, from out my mind !
With thine my soul by oath I bind ;
For I should be, as thou art, toss'd
To verge of madness by despair,
To me were my sweet Hilda lost,
Thy city's fate should Nuernberg share !
Most solemnly with thee I swear,
As I still hope to take to wife
A maid more precious far than life,
My sword, henceforth, no more shall fame,
Honour, or glory, ever claim.
Henceforth mine arms I dedicate,
With thine, against the Papal power ;
And Lutheran wives' and maidens' fate,
Ravish'd and butcher'd in their flower,
With thee avenge from this sad hour !
The reckoning cannot be delay'd,
Heaven's outstretch'd arm will not be stay'd !
Gustavus is the avenger sent,
His Swedish might the instrument,
To carry out the awful doom
Pronounced on guilty, bloody Rome ;
On her the vials of wrath are cast,
And Retribution neareth fast !

“ Come, then, as soon as ransom paid
Shall free thee from captivity,
Come to our camp—be not afraid
To lose the opportunity
Of vengeance there, for thou wilt find
Bold German youths of thine own mind ;

And the impending field will show,
What desperation can achieve!
Within the next few days I go
Back to my King, thee he 'll receive
For my sake, this my word believe,
And, well I know my gracious King,
In pity for thy suffering."

Gladly the youth the plan embraced,
And both a solemn compact made,
And future schemes of vengeance traced
While in the Austrian camp they stay'd,
For Tilly's entrance was delay'd
Another day, and in that time
The streets, to some extent, were clear'd
From blood and corpses, which besmear'd
Pavements and stones with gore and slime.
Then he rode in, with Pappenheim,
In triumph at his army's head,
And Eric through the streets was led,
As Tilly order'd. What he saw
Left fearful memories behind,
To haunt his vision evermore,
And brand an impress on his mind
Long years could not obliterate,
So ghastly was the bloody scene,
So terrible the city's fate,
Such awful slaughter had there been.
Well might the conqueror declare
Troy nor Jerusalem could compare
At all with Christian carnage there!





BOOK V.

The Battle of Leipzig.

UPON a camp-stool, in a canvas tent,
Plain and unfurnish'd, where no hangings lent,—
No cloth of gold with silver-broider'd thread,
Nor silken banners waving overhead,—
To its bare folds a rainbow-tinted glow,
Luxurious pomp, and meretricious show ;
No curtain'd canopy,—no massive plate,
Nor elevated dais,—throne of state,—
No golden crown, nor jewell'd sceptre there,—
The royal Hero's majesty declare.
Robed but in soldier's garb sat Sweden's King,
The Great Gustavus,—sat long pondering.
A cherish'd Book, the Lutheran Bible, lay,
His only guide throughout life's weary way,
Open before him on the rough pine board
Which served as table, and on which his sword,
His hat and cloak and riding-gloves were placed.
Though grief his soul's calm light had not effaced,
Upon his brow the past few days had traced
Deep lines of suffering, which too clear betray'd
The havoc anxious fears and doubts had made,
And anguish in his mind. Now, sore perplex'd,
The Monarch sought to find in sacred text

Of Holy Writ a healing balm for care,
A sovereign cure for his profound despair,
But found it not. Gustavus was a saint
As well as warrior-king: yet sometimes, faint,
And weary of the long-protracted strife,
Even the saint despairs of future life;
For he is human, and he cannot quite
Outgrow the doubts that, oft recurring, blight
The opening blossoms of Faith's joyous flower—
Rose-tinted Trust. It is not in the power
Of mortals, here on earth, to wing their flights
Above these earthly spheres to heavenly heights.
Ideal Happiness shall first be gain'd
When to Perfection Suffering has attain'd,—
When, bursting through the gloom of Sorrow's night,
Bliss-quickenng sunbeams shed eternal light,
And human fears and doubts all fade away
At the first glimpse of Heaven's glad dawning day.
When, in the place of gross and mortal blood,
Immortal Life, in pure æthereal flood,
Courses in rapture through the throbbing veins,
And, purified from all its earthly stains,
The body meets again in Heaven the soul,
Then only shall we fully know the whole,
Here hidden, meaning of that word—Content;
When there the veil of Ignorance is rent,
In ecstasy shall we the new-felt sense,
The endless ages through, experience!

Like Israel of old, the sainted King
Was not without his times of murmuring;
And, smarting under unexpected stroke,
His temper'd spirit even now outbroke,
Gave way desponding well-nigh to despair;
But, unlike Israel, it broke out in prayer,

The stronger, when it could no longer praise :—
“ O Thou, Who, from my childhood's earliest days,
Hast in my soul implanted a desire,
Faint spark at first, but bursting into fire
At manhood, to devote my sword—my life,
Howe'er unworthy—to the Lutheran strife,
To set from Rome's dread bonds Religion free,
To all the world secure true Liberty ;—
Thou, Who the earnest fire in me hast fann'd
By visions night and day, until the brand
Blazes unquenchable—wilt Thou thine hand—
Thy presence now withdraw, O Lord, from me
Ere I have scarce set out ? It cannot be !
And yet I am an open scorn become ;
My enemies will laugh, and how will Rome
Rejoice ! Why hast Thou put me thus to shame,
My God ? I undertook it in Thy name—
Thy glory to advance. Thou promptedst me.
Surely those deep heart-yearnings came from Thee ;—
Or were they all delusion and a snare,
Foul seeds implanted by the Devil there,—
Seeds of ambition in a fertile ground,
Which in my warlike instincts nurture found,
And flourish'd as I grew ? Would he make use
Of me ? Do I my genius abuse ?
Am I his tool to fashion out his will,
Myself deceived ? And am I doing ill,
In that through me still more the war is spread,
Which, if prolong'd, must still more torrents shed,—
Torrents of innocent blood throughout the land,
In broadening flood of woe on every hand ? ”

The King starts up, the watch admittance crave,
And tones he hears which this side of the grave

Gustavus thought he ne'er again should hear,—
The voice of one he loved, and held full dear.
"It must be Eric! Enter, let me see
Thy face again; none other can it be!"
Gustavus cried, and from his seat he sprung,
As Eric, and no other, entering flung
The heavy canvas folds in haste aside.
Nor did the Monarch seek at all to hide
The thicken'd utterance or the moisten'd eye
That proved the depth of his sincerity.
"Ah, Eric, welcome! risen as from the dead!
Of all the bitter tears my soul hath shed
Since last we parted, not the least, nor few,
Were shed on thine account. It was not true,
Thank God, that thou wast shot—a false report
They brought me! Would the other news they brought
Had been false too, and that the city still
Were standing! But to Heaven's Almighty Will
The king and peasant, both alike, must bow.
And, Eric, fearful doubts assail me now;
Faith is nigh spent; hard is it to believe,
It was His Will, nor can I now perceive
Mine own path clearly in the deep'ning gloom.
For Sodom and Gomorrah's awful doom,
Though terrible, was just; yet it was light,
Their momentary sufferings were slight,
Compared with yonder drawn-out agony,
Worse far than ev'n by Heaven-rain'd fires to die.
And how had Magdeburg all this deserved?—
But tell me, Eric, how wast thou preserved?
They told me thou wast shot, I mourn'd thee dead:
They saw thee out to execution led."

"And so I was!" was Eric's proud reply,
"'Tis true that I was captured, doom'd to die;

But Tilly interfered, I scarce know why,
Gave me my life, and order'd them to lead
Me through the town, hearing I was a Swede,
That I should bring thee word." "Then thou hast been
Inside the place, with thine own eyes hast seen
The havoc and the desolation wrought?
Exaggerated, say, is this report?"

"My Liege, I know not what thou mayst have heard,
But, whatsoe'er the scouts have brought thee word
Of savage carnage, torture, cruel brand,
Of horrid lust, when once the upper hand
Those fiendish Kroats in Magdeburg had gain'd,
Plying their devil's work while aught remain'd
To set in flame, or any one alive
To torture, ravish, slay, in vain they'd strive,
Howe'er heart-rending might be their report,
Howe'er appalling were the tidings brought,
Those awful horrors to exaggerate;
The horrid, naked truth they could not state!
For, never since God's new-created light
Burst the dense pall of Earth's chaotic night,
Have crimes of fouler, blacker, deeper dye
Polluted conquest. Christians' victory,
O'er brother-Christians, must example set
Of carnage that the world will ne'er forget.
Of forty thousand souls therein contain'd,
At daybreak, ere the town the stormers gain'd,
Less than two thousand still alive remain'd
At evening, when the sun's last sorrowing rays
Paled at that red volcano's lurid blaze,
That lighted up the country miles around
With livid glare, and shook with thundering sound,
Like storm-lash'd billows on a rock-bound shore,
The earth itself, so fearful was the roar,

So fierce the blast, a hurricane of fire
Driven by the storm-wind's gusts still higher and higher.

"Some perish'd, bravely fighting, sword in hand,
Striving in vain the foemen to withstand ;
But far the most were butcher'd in cold blood.
Hundreds of maidens in the Elbe's dark flood
Plunged in despair, and found a virgin-grave ;
Others, who fled from floor to floor to save
Their honour, reach'd the end of their resource
When the top story barr'd their further course ;
And, follow'd there by fell, relentless foes,
Heroic girls were found who even chose,
Crashing in madness through the window-pane,
The headlong leap, before dishonour's stain,
The dread sensation of the sick'ning fall,
And heavy thud, which, quivering, ended all.
But nerveless fear the greater number held,—
Far worse their awful fate ; myself beheld
Some fifty female corpses headless found,
Each with its arms behind it tightly bound,
And mutilated in a fearful way ;
Within the church in ghastly rows they lay,
Whither in vain for sanctuary they fled.
Neither were children spared : the captives said,
Among those awful scenes, if one there were
More foul, more devilish, more heart-rending there,
It was poor helpless babes transfix'd to see,
Writhing on spears in death-pang's agony.
Others from shrieking mothers' breasts were torn,
Then through the streets on pikes, aloft, were borne,
And, bleeding, cast alive into the flame
By demons, who yet boast the Christian name.
Tilly refused, entreated by a few
As more and more the scene appalling grew,

To stop the carnage, or to stay the sack,
But coldly answer'd: 'Gentlemen, come back
After another hour has pass'd, to me,
What can be done mayhap I then will see;
'Tis only reason that for all his toil
The soldier, too, should have his share of spoil.'

"The pillage thus went on as it began,
With streams of human gore the gutters ran;
Nor had the night itself an ending made,
Had not the fiends at length drawn back afraid,
Before the fearful conflagration's blaze—
Before the leaping, darting, scorching rays—
Stricken with terror by the awful roar
Of that fierce furnace-blast; but not before
Many had fallen victims to their greed,
Caught by the raging flames they did not heed.
Venturing too far, on plunder too intent,
To their last dread account were hundreds sent.
When, with the dawn, at length was somewhat spent
The fury of that fiery sea, remain'd
Of Magdeburg but choked-up streets, blood-stain'd,
And heaps of smouldering ash, and beams of wood;
Only one church and the Cathedral stood,
And a poor row of fisher huts beside
The river's bank, half hanging o'er its tide.
Nought else was left to mark the city's site
When morning broke upon that awful night.

"Two days it took the wider streets to clean;
Then Tilly enter'd, and a fearful scene,
Heart-rending, was presented to my gaze.
The lesser streets and all the narrow ways
Were left untouch'd, reeking and smouldering still,
Bearing sad witness to the deeds of ill,

The carnage, rapine, of that bloody day.
'Neath piles of festering corpses buried, lay
The wounded there, yet lingering on in death,
Moaning for water with their failing breath;
And babes who seek with low and wailing cry
To press the breasts that nourishment deny.
Children survived the city wide to roam,
Seeking their parents vainly, and their home."

"Ah, Eric! 'tis indeed a dreadful tale,"
Exclaim'd the King, "my spirits well-nigh fail!
Scarce can I now my purpose still sustain,
My soul is rent with sorrow, doubt, and pain;
Nor can I more in prayer ev'n find relief,
Worn out by the intensity of grief,
Borne down by anguish almost to despair,
Bearing alone my heavy load of care.
Now, for the first time in my life, throughout
My varied trials, I my mission doubt!
Not that I feel at all diminish'd powers
Within myself; however darkly lowers
The gathering storm-cloud of adversity,
My genius soars the same, as bold, as free,
As in the sunlit rays of victory.
Nor is it for myself I, selfish, fear;
I long have known that when in mid-career
Of glorious conquest must I, victor, fall.
It pains me from the heart's deep springs that all
These heap'd-up miseries must be endured
On my account. Nor am I quite assured
What is the spur that fiercely pricks me on.
Were it Ambition, then were I undone,—
And is it not? I would myself persuade
I war for Faith and Freedom, and to aid

Our Lutheran brothers in their desperate fight
'Gainst Austrian tyranny and Papal might.
But, Eric, it is easy to deceive
Oneself! The Devil helps one to believe
That Heaven the warrior on its errand sends,
To which Vain-glory inclination lends!"

"My Liege," said Eric, "in the Polish War,
When I, as page, with thee first weapon bore
In all the ardour of my boyish pride,
Thou didst the warrior's thirst for glory chide.
I understood thee not, for then my aim
Was to attain the soldier's highest fame,
And in the pomp of war and victory
I nought of horror or of crime could see;
But I have seen and heard these few days past
More than enough of misery to last
A life dragg'd out to the extremest span,
The fourscore labouring years allotted man;
And I would arms renounce, the camp forswear,
Were't not for those foul crimes enacted there.
No longer now for glory will I fight,
Only for Vengeance, and the Lutheran Right!
As I in Tilly's camp a prisoner lay
I found a youth who on that awful day
Had seen his babe's brains dash'd upon the street,
His wife far worse than butcher'd at his feet.
Eternal Vengeance against Rome he swore,
Hail'd thee, the Avenger of the Lutheran War.
The fate that there his wife and child befell
Was that of thousands, could the stones but tell
The bloody history of that crime-stain'd day.
Thou art the Avenger! Lead thou but the way,
The Lutherans throughout all Germany

Cannot but follow—all whom maiden's love,
Or wife's affection, children's joys can move;
For they were all unworthy of the name
Of men,—much less dare they the title claim,
The holy title, sacred, hallow'd tie,
Of husband, father,—who'd not fiercely fly
To arms for Vengeance,—would not dedicate
Their wealth, their lives, their all, from such a fate
Their helpless wives and children dear to save!
My Liege, thy royal pardon must I crave
If in this matter I do seem too free,
If I have spoken with a liberty
The subject should not use towards his King:—
With cries for Vengeance will the country ring!"

"Eric," replied the King, "thou show'st, forsooth,
The impetuosity again of youth.
For Vengeance, Eric, should no Christian fight,
Nor shouldst thou name it with the Lutheran Right.
The fated city's fall, Heaven ne'er decreed
That thousands more should to avenge it bleed!
His Country, Faith, and Freedom to defend
The Christian warrior must his life-blood spend;
But for no other cause should draw the sword!
On this the teaching of our Blessed Lord
Is plain and knows no specious argument.
Believe me, Eric, I were well content
With any peace that promised to endure,
That would to all the Lutheran lands secure
Their faith and liberties. But leave me now,
Anxieties sit heavy on my brow,
And, Eric, I would fain e'en be alone.
Rudolph for my scant welcome will atone.
God bless thee, lad, I cannot even say
How glad I am to see thee safe this day."

The King was left, and, wrestling long in prayer,
Regain'd at last his wonted mien and air,
The calm assurance and the steadfast eye
Vouchsafed to them who ever seek on high
For heavenly guidance through their life's dark course,
The confidence that wells from purest source.
Soon consciousness of honest rectitude,
And singleness of purpose him endued
With clearer vision, and the Hero found
His path of duty mapp'd on hallow'd ground.
The Lutheran youth flock'd to him day by day,
All doubts and fears henceforth were cast away;
For Magdeburg's destruction clearly show'd
The Germans had no longer middle road;
No longer now avail'd neutrality,—
Imperialist or Swedish all must be.
Rome and the Kaiser their advantage press'd
And work'd upon the terrors of the rest
Of all the German towns. On Nuernberg first,
And Ulm, the Imperial thunders threatening burst;
Throughout all Swabia the Lutheran Cause
Was now subjected to tyrannic laws.
The solemn treaties that should have secured
Freedom to Lutheran worship, and assured
To Catholic and Protestant alike
Equality, at length the Jesuits strike
From off the Imperial statutes, in their place
With characters of blood Rome's laws to trace.

To Hesse next the Austrian Despot turn'd;
But, as the Landgrave every message spurn'd,
Tilly was order'd to achieve by force
What could not be attain'd by gentler course.
The Imperial General made the hard demand,

The Landgrave must at once his troops disband,
Must quarter Austrian regiments in his land,
Yield up his towns, levies and gold prepare,
And either friend or foe himself declare.
Not Magdeburg's sad fate, nor yet the sight
Of Tilly's threatening legions, could affright
The dauntless Hessian, who this answer sent :
That in his fortresses he never meant
Strange garrisons to have ; would keep the field
Himself in force, his capital to shield ;
No single regiment would he ev'n disband,
And to the Imperial General's last demand
One only answer would he thereto send,
Himself and lands to the last he would defend,
If treated as a foe ; and if supplies and gold
The General wanted, scarce need he be told,
In plenty both in Munich he could find—
No more had he to say, they knew his mind.
Tilly at once prepared to take the field,
But, thinking that the Landgrave still might yield,
Dispatch'd two strong detachments from his force,
Which both were beaten back with heavy loss ;
And ere he could with his whole might draw near,
The Swedish march dispell'd all further fear.
To attack in person Tilly did not dare,
Lest he his flank to Gustave should lay bare ;
And thus the Hessian land escaped the flood
That else had overflow'd her fields with blood.

While yet the Swedish King lay to the north
Of Magdeburg, his generals had driven forth
From Mecklenburg the last remaining bands
Of Austrian soldiery ; and to their lands,
Plunder'd and wasted by the cruel war,
The King could now the banish'd Dukes restore.

Gustavus entry into Guestrow made
In triumph with the Dukes, and when he bade
The people there their rightful lords receive,
Unfeignèd was the joy we may believe,
And long remember'd was that festive day.
It chanced at Tangermund upon the way
A band of Austrian plunderers were brought
Before the King, who, kneeling, mercy sought
And begg'd for pardon, grovelling at his feet,—
For to the greatest wretch is life most sweet.
Gustavus cast on them a scornful frown :
" Before a man, Man never should kneel down !"
The Hero said. " Stand up ! I am not God,
But throw yourselves down humbly on the sod.
Thank Him, Him only, for the life I give,
Pray Him to make you worthy still to live.
This land far worse than robbers ye've laid waste,
Your track by smouldering hamlets may be traced.
Had ye proved stronger, ye would not have given
My soldiers quarter. Miscreants, by Heaven,
Richly have ye the felon's death deserved !
Far worse than Turks had done my friends ye served.
But thank God for my mercy—go your way,
I would not stain with blood this joyful day !"

No sooner had the Swedish King return'd
To his own camp at Werben than he learn'd
The Landgrave William was upon his way,
Coming in person his respects to pay.
The first of all the reigning princes he
Who dared the Kaiser's dreaded enmity ;
With heart and soul embracing Gustave's side,
His fortresses to him he open'd wide.
All Sweden's foes he undertook to treat
Henceforth as foes, her friends as friends to greet

With open-handed friendship ; and, in short,
Whatever pressure 'gainst him might be brought,
Still to maintain the common Lutheran Cause
With loyalty to Sweden through these wars.
Gustavus promised he would ne'er forsake
The Landgrave ; nor would peace with Austria make,
Unless from Austrian vengeance he was sure
The Landgrave's interests too he could secure.
The alliance then auspiciously begun
Continued till the weary war was done ;
And when at length, with the Westphalian peace,
The thirty years of strife and bloodshed cease,
The Hessians have no reason to repent
They were the first who aid to Gustave lent,
And steadfastly remain'd, the war all through,
When all were treacherous, still to Sweden true.

Tilly, who truly now stood sore in need
Of fresh supplies both man and horse to feed,
To expose his rear to Sweden's force afraid,
Dared not as yet the Hessian realms invade—
Turn'd longing eye upon the Saxon lands
Which had been plunder'd least by Friedland's bands.
And leaving Hessè for another day,
The Landgrave's insolence he would repay,
To Elector John of Saxony he sent
Demand he should disband his armament,
Or, better still, fight under his command
And help to drive the Swedes from out the land.
Nor did he fail the Elector to remind
What treatment he might now expect to find,
In case he also should prove obstinate ;
He had been spared as yet, but then his fate
Should be more awful just on that account.
The smoke of burning towns and farms should mount

Throughout his fertile lands to highest heaven,
And he, a wandering outcast, should be driven
To seek in foreign courts a livelihood,
And bear an exile's lot as best he could.

But John of Saxony, for very shame,
Since he the northern leadership would claim,
Himself to pose as Lutheran champion meant,
Was bound such haughty mandate to resent;
So Tilly's messengers he did invite
To princely banquet, spread before their sight—
When they had feasted on his wine and meat—
Dessert of nuts alone, then from his seat
He rose, and spoke: "My lords, I plainly see
Ye have determined that our Saxony,
A dish that ye have hitherto reserved,
At last upon your table shall be served.
Well, be it so! but, mind you, the dessert,
Our Saxon nuts, your teeth perchance may hurt."

But reinforcement Tilly had received
Of fifteen thousand troops, and now believed
He might Gustavus' presence set at nought;
And seeing here the excuse he long had sought
To overrun the fertile Saxon lands,
In spite of Ferdinand's express commands,
Which hitherto these territories spared,
To enter on this new campaign prepared,
And breaking up his camp, made good his word,
And ravaged Saxony with fire and sword!

The Elector John, though much it hurt his pride,
Advised by Arnheim, had already tried
A firm ally to gain in Sweden's King,
Begging that Gustave would his forces bring

And help him to defend the Saxon lands,
Should Tilly still persist in his demands.
Gustavus secretly was well content
To ally himself with Saxony, but meant
To humble first the Elector, and to find
If it were safe to trust his alter'd mind;
So in his coldest manner he received
The Saxon Minister. "I'm sorely grieved,"
He said to Arnheim, "for thy master's sake,
But he my proffer'd friendship would not take,
Nor would he even help me when he could;
Had he but done so, Magdeburg had stood,
And Saxony had no invader seen,
Her fertile lands had never ravaged been;
And now it seems he only sends to me
Since he needs help in his extremity.
Go back, and tell him that I cannot see
Why I should risk myself or my allies
On his account. That were indeed unwise!
His ministers are still in Austrian pay;
How do I know they'll not the Cause betray?
The treaty he would make would soon be torn
Were the Imperial forces once withdrawn;
And well I ween the Austrian Kaiser's smile
From my alliance would thy lord beguile!
Then go back to the Prince again and say,
Let him go his and I will go my way."

But Arnheim would not lightly be dismiss'd,
His master's orders were—he must persist
Until he had Gustavus' promise gain'd;
So in the Swedish camp he still remain'd.
With greater energy his suit he press'd,
And pray'd Gustavus would let by-gones rest;

To any terms the Elector would agree
For Sweden's help in this extremity,
"Well, these are my demands," then said the King;
"The Elector must, ere I will succour bring,
Yield up his fortress Wittenberg to me;
His eldest son must also hostage be
That he the new alliance will not break;
Must yield his traitor councillors who take
The Kaiser's gold, contribute me a sum
To pay three months my troops, and I will come."

"Not only Wittenberg,"—the Elector cried,
As he again sent Arnheim on his ride,
"Not only Wittenberg,—I'll Torgau yield,—
All Saxony,—if he will only shield
My capital from Tilly's vengeful bands!
I will deliver up into his hands
My family, as hostages,—nay, come
Myself, if he require; will pay the sum,—
All my resources, tell him, he may claim;
I will yield up the traitors he shall name:
My life itself upon the Cause I'll set,
Let him but help me, and the past forget!"
Gustavus only wish'd his faith to try,
And thinking he could on the Prince rely,
Touch'd by the weakness of the timid man,
Whose present fears his policy outran,
Sent answer back: "The want of confidence
Display'd towards him had quicken'd, too, the sense
Of his mistrust; but since the Elector threw
Himself into his arms, he now withdrew
All his demands, and would be quite content
His troops but one month's pay he should present;
And even that he hoped soon to repay,—
He wish'd no burdens on his friends to lay."

The alliance made, no time Gustavus lost,
At once the Elbe the Swedish army cross'd,
And thus effected on the following day
A junction with the troops of Saxony,
Ere Tilly knew exactly what was meant,
Much less the Monarch's movements could prevent.
At Torgau next, within the fortress walls,
Council of war Gustavus promptly calls
(And Brandenburg's invited to attend)
How best the Lutheran Cause he may defend ;
Whether to risk all on a single field,—
If beaten there the Protestants must yield
For ever to the Austrian Catholic sway.
To advance, the Electors urged, without delay,
And thus at once the victory secure ;
But Gustave, on the contrary, was not sure.
"Upon a chance, two Electorates, a Crown,
Should we to fight determine, we lay down,"
The Hero said, "and who would ere rely
On the uncertain hazard of a die ?
And such is war : it might be, for our sin,
Heaven would permit the enemy to win.
My Crown, were I and my whole army lost,
Has still defences not so lightly forced.
Secured by distance and a powerful fleet,
By warlike subjects, it could brave defeat,
And would escape the last extremity ;
But ye—with you it would far different be,
Your lands would not escape, in case the fight
You force should turn against us—and it might !"

But John of Saxony was still for war :
It grieved his Highness' petty spirit sore—
These idle armaments' tremendous cost.
Decisive battle, whether won or lost,

Seem'd preferable far in every way
To the expense of even brief delay.
If won, he would acquire at least renown,
And possibly therewith the Imperial Crown ;
If lost, his peace with Austria he would make,
And Sweden's and the Lutheran Cause forsake.
For even now, when side by side he stood
With Sweden's King, his vacillating mood
Still kept the craven's selfish mind unstrung ;
Ambition, fear, poised in the balance hung—
Fear, lest the brunt of the campaign should fall
Upon his lands, forced to maintain them all,
His own troops, and the Swedes and Austrians too.
No motive but self-interest he knew ;
For Lutheran Right, or Freedom, little cared,
His treasury, his own lands must be spared.
And Tilly had his ravages begun,
Already had the town of Leipzig won :
The Elector burn'd all Saxony to free
From friend and foe by one great victory.

Far different motives held with Gustave sway,
He knew upon the issue of the day
Hung the world's fate. If Rome and Austria won,
The Lutheran Cause for ever were undone ;
For never since the nations trembling saw
That mighty armament of Papal war,
The ponderous load the groaning ocean bore,
And all but freeborn Britons, awestruck, quail'd,
As from the Tagus arrogantly sail'd
The Great Armada, freighted with the doom
Pass'd on rebellious sons by Bloody Rome,
Irons and chains, and all the tortures dread
By which the Holy Church her children led

Back to the fold from whence they, erring, stray'd,
Had good men cause, as now, to be afraid
Lest Freedom, Faith, and all that they held dear
From God's own earth at once should disappear.
Well might all Europe breathless wait to see
What the dread outcome of that day would be ;
And well might ev'n the Swedish Hero feel
His foeman Tilly worthy of his steel,
And hesitate a general to engage
Of whom, on fickle Fortune's chequer'd page,
Defeat was never writ,—who ever won
The battles that he chose to venture on.
And if Gustavus rated him too high,
He show'd therein his native modesty :
Genius in generous minds is ever prone
To measure others' talents by its own.
But all Gustavus' prudent cautions fail'd,
The Elector's arguments at length prevail'd :
'Twere better policy at once to fall
On Tilly, ere his troops he could recall ;
'Twere wiser boldly now to risk their fate,
Than idly in their camp entrench'd to wait
Until, with reinforcements at his back,
The foe in whelming might should them attack.

Slowly the sullen mists were roll'd away
As rose the sun on that eventful day :
It seem'd the sorrowing earth would veil in gloom
The impending field, that threaten'd to entomb
The sole remaining hope of Liberty,
In her last desperate effort to be free.*
But Heaven's glad sun, though rising lurid red,
A portent of the blood that day would shed,
Shot o'er the battle-plain his dazzling beams ;—
Through the rent pall his radiant glory streams,

Dispersing all the lingering shades of night
With golden rays of hopeful, cheery light ;—
As though the glorious issue he could see,
Freedom and Faith secured by victory ;—
As though he knew, when on that field he set,
All her past sufferings Europe would forget,
Down-trodden peoples cast away their fears,
The widow and the orphan dry their tears,
And all unite with joy to Heaven to raise
The loud thanksgiving and the hymn of praise.
And as the sunbeams burst the vaporous cloud
Which vainly sought the battle-field to shroud,
The Swedish van saw through the lifting mist
That, lingering still, the wooded hill-tops kiss'd,
The Austrian army, waiting for the fray,
Drawn up in serried ranks in close array.
Swiftly from rank to rank the tidings flew ;
Eric and Rudolph had enough to do
To carry to each troop the King's commands,
And hurry up the quickly mustering bands.
Already there the skirmishing began,
Where Pappenheim hurls fiercely on the van
Two thousand cuirassiers, but cannot shake
Their stubborn ranks, can no impression make,
Nor can prevent the passage of the brook—
Quickly each troop its battle-station took.
As sullenly the cuirassiers retire
Peals the loud thunder of the foemen's fire.

This day Gustavus long had held in sight,
And duly plann'd the order of the fight ;
Thus, as his Generals all his tactics knew,
Soon into line his marching columns drew.
Gustavus Horn commanded the left wing,
The centre Teufel, and the right the King,

With Banner under him to take the lead
Should wavering ranks his presence elsewhere need.
The cavalry were placed on both the flanks ;
And, interspersed among the horsemen's ranks,
Gustavus well-train'd musketeers had set,
Whose deadly fire the hostile charges met.
Thus all day long before their swords they cross'd,
The Imperial cuirassiers formation lost,
And ere they could close up their ranks again
Were ridden down, and scatter'd o'er the plain.
The Saxons on the left took up their place,
But separate from the Swedes a little space :
On them Gustavus did not dare rely,
His Swedes would conquer, well he knew, or die
Each man upon the ground on which he stood ;
And as he fell his comrade would make good
His place, prepared his life-blood too to shed
For the good Cause in which his fellow bled.
The Elector's troops, who ne'er had fought before,
Were inexperienced in the alarms of war,
To sudden panic they might easy yield,
At the first onset break, and fly the field ;
And thus the Swedes into confusion throw,
Ere they could form anew to face the foe.

The battle-ranks were set, but neither side
Cared to begin the day. The cannon plied
Through two long hours, at intervals, their shot ;
But in those days the artillery was not
What it has now become, a perfect arm,
So Tilly's cannonade did little harm ;
And all the balls which at their ranks he sent
The Swedes from forming up did not prevent.
And, hark ! their loud hurrahs re-echoing ring
Above the cannons' roar as rides the King

Majestically down the front, alone,
His eagle glance upon each regiment thrown;
And as he checks his snorting charger's rein,
Louder than ever swell those shouts again.
"Swedes, countrymen!" the Royal Hero said,
"This day upon us all shall honour shed,
Eternal honour, ay, undying name;—
Here grander title shall the meanest claim
Than ever yet the proudest noble bore,—
Hero, or Martyr, of Religion's war!
And I, although your King, can claim no more.
Upon us here the nations' eyes are set.
Comrades! the world this day will ne'er forget!
'Twas for this day we cross'd the Baltic tide,
This field Religion's freedom will decide.
I dare not promise you the victory,
But I dare promise now with you to die
If here we may not conquer. On this field,
Ev'n where we stand, our heart's blood we will yield,
Should the Eternal Wisdom thus decree;
Gladly for Sweden's Faith and Liberty!"
He ceased, and twice ten thousand throats
Catch up, and echo loud the battle-notes,—
"For Faith and Liberty!"—"And for our King!"
High peals the deafening shout from wing to wing.
Was there a man in all that stern array
Who at the moment would not proudly lay—
A man—for Luther's Faith, for Gustave's crown,
For Liberty,—his life most gladly down?
What need to ask? Read in each flashing eye,
Read there the answer—hear the quick reply
In the long shout that through the heavens rent,
Pierced to the sky, and shook the firmament.
With head uncover'd, low the Hero bow'd,
As King and Soldier, he might well be proud

Such true, devoted subjects to command ;
As Man, it grieved him sore that gallant band,
Should such sad sacrifice Religion need,
Ev'n to destruction he would have to lead.
Slowly he rode back all along that front
That soon would have to bear the battle's brunt ;
And as he rode a tear sprang to his eye,
And from the Monarch's breast escaped a sigh :
His feelings such as brook of no control,
Deep-seated, welling from a hero's soul.
Abstracted he his charger guides, scarce hears
The sounding shouts that ring upon his ears,
To where his generals stand he wends his way,
And gives his last instructions for the day.

Meanwhile, how goes it in the Austrian camp,
As now the Swedes approach with steady tramp ?—
Will cruel Tilly wait his lines within,
Or with assault himself the day begin ?
Has he to-day his former daring lost,
Or is his mind by plans conflicting tost—
Like helmless ship upon a stormy sea
Driven hither, thither, in uncertainty ?
Why for the first time in his proud career,
Victorious ever, sees he cause for fear ?
Upon his mind hangs Magdeburg's red fate—
Dragging him down as with a millstone's weight.
The wretched man awoke that fateful morn
From torturing dreams, to wish himself unborn.
Did but this life annihilation end,
Could he the past into oblivion send,
By his own act, in death he'd gain relief :
Not his the comfort ev'n of unbelief ;
By his own hand he could not, dared not die—
Dared not to venture on Eternity.

Such were his terrors when he first awoke,
Ere yet upon that field the dawning broke ;
Those terrors all day long close to him clung,
Upon his soul that heavy millstone hung :
Thus him, when needed most, his genius fail'd,
Conscience, the bad man's bane, o'er it prevail'd.

In vain to advance does Pappenheim advise,
Ever in bold attack the advantage lies ;
'Twas not his wont e'er to avoid the fight,
Much less when once the foe was full in sight.
Tilly would not engage at all that day,
Strong reinforcements were upon the way,
Within his lines the King he would await :
Let Sweden if he chose rush on his fate !
But undetermined was his unhinged mind,
His plans unsettled, changeful as the wind :
First, when the favouring moment had slipp'd by,
Decided he the open field to try,
Order'd his troops in motion to be set,
In battle order should the foe be met.—
His strong intrenchments he at last forsook
And in the plain a new position took ;
But even then his purpose waver'd still,
His guns he mass'd behind him on the hill.
It seem'd to attack at once he did not dare,
But meant his cannon should the way prepare,
And, casting from the high ground overhead
Above his troops their balls, should panic spread
Among the Saxons, who in rout might bring
Destruction on the veterans of the King.

If such his object, it was doom'd to fail,
Against Gustavus it could nought avail ;

Too good a general he by far to throw
Young levies on a season'd, veteran foe :
Upon the left he held them in reserve,
Deeming the Elector's troops would fitly serve
To turn the wavering fortunes of the day,—
He dared not trust them to commence the fray.
Firm and immovable the battle-shocks
His well-train'd Swedes would stand—as Sweden's rocks,
However wild the wintry storm may be,
Brave the fierce buffets of the raging sea.
The battle's brunt must fall on them alone,
No other troops there trusts he like his own.
Well had it been could John have been content
To bear his part, as King Gustavus meant ;
But, jealous of the Royal Hero's fame,
Fearing he might the day entirely claim,
The Elector push'd his forces to the van :—
'Twas indiscretion that with him outran
His valour there ; and Gustave thus was forced
To see his careful plan of battle cross'd.

Some time the hostile hosts confronting stood ;
Justly, as yet, each leader could make good
To undefeated generalship his claim ;
But on this day one of the two his fame
Must to the conqueror, his rival, yield,—
And which would be the victor of this field ?
But with Gustavus not his fame alone,
But Sweden's Faith and Liberty, his throne,
And royal life, the Lutherans' only stay,
Hung on the uncertain issue of the day.
Well might Gustavus, well might Tilly wait
Each for the other's onslaught, hesitate
Too rashly on this field to tempt his fate !

But, hark ! there beats at last the Austrian drum,
The cannon speak anew, and see they come :
Each regiment to the breeze its flag unfurls,—
Full on the Swedish centre Tilly hurls
His war-train'd masses ; on the King's right wing
Pappenheim's troopers charge, loud thundering ;
The trembling earth beneath their horsehoofs shakes,
The heart of ev'n the oldest veteran quakes.
The Swedish line a murderous volley pours,
Fiercely each pointed Swedish cannon roars,
The musketry's sharp, quick, incessant rattle
Announces o'er the field the engaging battle.
The sun itself is hid by dust and smoke,
And cries of anguish, shouts of triumph woke,
As Austria's charging squadrons reel'd, and broke ;
But swiftly they their shatter'd ranks re-form,
On the devoted Swedes 'gain breaks the storm,
'Gain from that stubborn front the lightnings flash,
Again peals out the small-arms' volleying crash ;
But onward still the cuirassiers dash.
Although with many a gap their ranks are torn,
Though many a rider to the earth is borne,
Still on they charge, right on the levell'd spears,
As pikemen take the place of musketeers,
Standing, unflinching, steady as a rock,
Shoulder to shoulder, to receive the shock ;
While dashing through the marksmen's open'd ranks
The Swedish horsemen burst upon their flanks.
In wildest tumult home the charge is driven,
And shouts, and yells, and oaths ascend to heaven,
With clash of swords, of breastplates, helmets riven,
The cry of agony, the long, deep groan,
There mingle with the trumpet's brazen tone,
The leaders' rallying shouts of hoarse command,
And answering cheers the foe to still withstand.

The dropping musket fire's unceasing roll,
The piercing shrieks that rend the very soul,
As hissing bombs, exploding, burst asunder,
The deepboom'd cannons' loud and frequent thunder,
The tramp of myriad hoofs upon the ground,
Unite in one confused, unearthly sound,
As though ev'n Hell itself had burst its bound

Behind his foremost line Gustavus stood
High in his saddle, and the conflict view'd:
His right he saw would well maintain their own;
Upon his centre next his glance was thrown,
There Teufel was not press'd was also clear,
But, see! what means that dust-cloud in the rear,
Far to the left, beyond the Swedish line—
A thick, dense cloud, where smoke and dust combine?
And as he look'd a hurrying horseman rode,
Red was the charger's flank that he bestrode,
Up to the spot where stood the Hero King:
"My Liege," he said, "I urgent message bring
From General Horn—The Elector's forces flee."
"The Elector's!" said the King; "ah, now I see—
Then that's what yonder cloud means in our rear.
Thank Heaven! I thought we had real cause for fear
In Tilly's look'd-for succours drawing near.
How came the Elector to engage, canst tell?"
"My Liege, I hardly know how it befell,
His army he march'd forward to the van
Already ere the battle scarce began,
And Tilly, whose repeated onsets fail'd
On our left wing and centre, him assail'd;
And by a sudden turning movement threw,
As he his columns from the assault withdrew,
His veteran troops upon the Saxon ranks.
Short was the contest there, soon both the flanks

Were crumpled up, the centre only stood,
And for a while the desperate fight made good ;
But inwards from the flanks the panic spread,
And all threw down their arms, and headlong fled,
The Elector 'mong the first. The Saxon slain
In scatter'd heaps strew wide the battle-plain.
Me, General Horn"—he never spoke the rest,
A musket-ball struck full upon his breast
That first had grazed the sleeve of Gustave's coat ;
The faltering words yet rattled in his throat
As, falling from the saddle, backwards cast,
In one long, choking groan he breathed his last.

"Ride, Eric, ride in haste to Gustave Horn,
Tell him that Tilly's onslaughts must be borne,"
Gustavus cried, "somehow, as best he may,
On that depends the issue of the day :
He must his post successfully defend.
Tell him, as yet, I cannot succour send,
Beyond three regiments—German volunteers ;
But for his grim endurance I've no fears.
If Tilly presses sore, tell him to throw
His left flank back, but facing still the foe,
So can he cover best our threaten'd rear,
And to our succours thus his wing draw near.
Give him these orders, but no longer bide,
The greater danger still is at my side.
And, Rudolph, speed—thou mayest overtake
The Elector—Arnheim yet. For honour's sake,
For fame, for all a soldier should hold dear,
Beg them to fling away their coward fear,
For very shame again their standards rear,
Rally their troops, if but one regiment,
And at its head themselves again present.

Heaven knows our need this day of every man!
One-tenth of those who from the battle ran
May ten times over yet this field decide.
Then haste thee with all speed upon thy ride!"

Away they race—and now his own right wing
Needs all the attention of the Hero King.
Charge upon charge does Pappenheim drive home,
Each is repell'd, but still afresh they come.
The Swedish line is often sore beset,
But stands undaunted and unshaken yet.
Each soldier feels his courage mounting high,
Proud thus to fight beneath his Monarch's eye,
Whose presence animates, whose voice controls,
Midst fiercest carnage, and where fellest rolls
The battle's thundercloud—where Death's knell tolls,
Not as at quiet eve from peaceful steeple,
When, bow'd with years and honours from his people
The patriarch passes to his welcome rest,
As loving friends hang o'er his last behest;
Now from the cannon's mouth along the ground
It booms, and not in solemn measured sound,
As floats the bell upon the summer air
Against their turn to warn men to prepare,
But fitful and confused, with ruin fraught.
Not this the time for meditative thought,
Nor this the place for inward communing,
No measured knell now for the dead can ring;
Too hurried flow life's sands fast through the glass,
Too many souls at every moment pass,
Rent from the body in its manhood's bloom,
Consign'd, unhonour'd, to a nameless tomb.

Six times had Pappenheim the King assail'd,
And six times had his fiery onset fail'd,

When Eric from the left wing reappear'd.
Gustavus Horn stood firm, but much he fear'd
The Saxons were entirely put to flight ;
For Tilly now was hurling all his might
In fourfold odds upon their hard-press'd wing,
And General Horn sent word he hop'd his King
Would either send or, better, succour bring.
"We'll come, ourselves, ere long," Gustavus said,
"Soon will, I trust, fierce Pappenheim be sped :
The last attack was scarcely so sustain'd.
Ride back, tell him the victory's nearly gain'd
On this our wing, and, as thou passest, say
To Teufel he must charge with his array,
Straight for the hills at our first signal make,
And—'tis unguarded—yon artillery take ;
On Tilly's flank the captured cannon train,
And on the foe a storm of grape-shot rain :—
Thus their own guns shall ev'n decide the fate
Of this day's battle—while they hesitate,
Doubtful how best the contest to renew,
I, with this wing, will fall upon them too ;
But Horn must, till I lend him helping hand,
Fight dauntless on, and make determined stand."

Once more upon the Swedes the whirlwind broke—
The seventh time ; once more beneath the stroke
Of countless ironshod hoofs the hard, dry ground
In earthquake shakes ; again breaks forth the sound.
The grating sound, of small-arms' deadly rattle ;
And wreathing smoke once more obscures the battle.
Fiercer than ever comes the Austrian foe,
More furious falls each trooper's ringing blow,
And louder, hoarser is each leader's shout,
But more complete, more hopeless is the rout.

"On, troopers, charge!" cries out the Swedish King,
"Our squadrons all united on them fling,
And scatter them like chaff before the storm.
No more shall they their broken ranks re-form!
Pursue, cut down, and chase them off the field—
All who resist—quarter to all who yield!"

In vain strives Pappenheim to save the day,
To form behind the guns; as clears away
The smoke from Sweden's last discharge 'tis seen
The guns are lost; before him Teufel's been,
And nothing now remains but rapid flight,
'Tis hopeless to again renew the fight.
The Swedish horsemen ever press him close,
More terrible the awful carnage grows;
Some fourteen hundred troopers with him fled,
Upon that fatal field the rest lay dead.
And thus the day was won upon the right,
And Teufel's centre now possess'd the height,
Was hard at work the captured guns to train
To sweep the left side of the distant plain,
Where Gustave Horn the battle still made good,
And still in desperate fight undaunted stood.

Though fierce the contest there, it fiercer grew,
O'erwhelming masses Tilly forward threw.
Hard press'd in front, beset on either flank,
The Swedes give ground, but in unbroken rank,
Dispute each foot, as loth to yield an inch,
Scorning from death—though face to face—to flinch.
Already Tilly deems the victory won,
Soon must they break and, like the Saxons, run:
Express to Munich, to Vienna's sent
To announce the victory gain'd, so confident,

So more than sure is he of full success.
Thus matters stood as Eric reach'd the press,
And spurring to the General's side in haste
The outlines of Gustavus' plan he traced.
It needed not to give the King's command,
'Twas plain while life was left the Swedes would stand.

And now the foe falls back, again to form,
'Twas but the shortest pause, as when the storm
Lulls for a moment for a fiercer blast,
To form for onslaught that should be the last.
Near was the crisis—but the General then
Riding before the ranks, address'd his men :
"Soldiers," he said, "thus far ye have withstood
The foe undaunted, and as brave men should ;
But now your King asks even more of you,
And yet he does not ask that ye should do
Aught that he would not undertake himself.
Soldiers ! we fight not here for power or pelf.
Fought we for honour, glory, fame, enough
Were done already ! Nay, we're different stuff,
We Swedes, from yonder mercenary horde.
We fight for Faith, the Gospel of our Lord,
For Freedom and our Country—we must die,
If needs be, and we will, for Liberty,
For Faith, for Sweden, and our noble King—
Ay, die for him, die without murmuring,
For he would die for us : and he will bring
Us yet the succour we so sorely need,
If not, then like true Swedes we'll stand and bleed,
Each in his rank, and never, never yield—
Victors or vanquish'd, still we'll keep the field !"

Scarce had he said, ere died away the shout
His words call'd forth, than compass'd round about,

Front, flanks and rear, they were again beset,
That fearful *mêlée* none will e'er forget,
Nor will its horrors ever fade away
To those brave warriors, to their dying day.
Again, again they charge, those Austrian hordes
Press headlong to their fate on Swedish swords ;
For muskets, useless, now aside are thrown,
And the stern fight is hand to hand alone.
No longer is the battle veil'd in smoke,
No dropping shots are heard, nought but the stroke
Of steel on steel, no shouts, and scarce a cry,
Save dying groan and shriek of agony ;
Too desperate is the grapple-close of death,
Too scant the struggling foemen's failing breath :
In blows and thrusts their energies are spent,
Horsemen and foot in wild confusion blent.
Woe to the wounded there ! for he who falls,
Vainly for quarter, or for succour calls,
Beneath that surging, madden'd press he's crush'd,
His quivering body trampled in the dust.
Too fierce, too terrible, the fight to last,
The onset slackens,—and the worst is past !

But no, a fresh attack to this succeeds.
Who is it yonder that the column leads ?
It must be some one of exalted rank ;
Ay, and it is ; for from the Swedish flank,
Above the battle's tumult, rises high
In recognition wild, a single cry :
" 'Tis he, 'tis Tilly ! " and a horseman leapt
Out from the ranks, and spurring onward swept
With levell'd lance in desperate career !
And Eric sees, as now he passes near,
In his fierce countenance, determin'd set,
A vengeful lightning-blaze he'll ne'er forget,

And knows him now,—his fellow-prisoner he,
Whose vengeance shall outlive Eternity,
And marks his tight-closed lip and flaming eye,
As, like a meteor flash, he gallops by :
Straight as the bullet flies he onward press'd,
Aiming a headlong thrust at Tilly's breast.
One word alone his voice in thunder peal'd,
But at that word Count Tilly fairly reel'd ;
That word, 'twas "Magdeburg," revived his dreams,
And cow'd him more than ev'n the vengeful gleams
Of blazing wrath shot from those flashing eyes.
No fence, the General, conscience stricken, tries ;
And the next moment had received the thrust,
But roll'd both horse and rider in the dust,
As from the foremost files, with cloud of smoke,
And loud report, an echoing volley broke ;
Yet ev'n in death his eye on Tilly hung,
And "Vengeance" quiver'd still upon his tongue.

"He's down!" cried Eric, with recovering breath,
"He's down, and shall not we avenge his death?
I knew him, and I vow'd to be his friend,
Sad was his story,—gallant is his end!
General, a troop of horse to me entrust,
And let me, I entreat, drive home that thrust :
A second time, believe, it scarce will fail!"
"Nay," answer'd Horn, "'twould be of no avail!
Why shouldst thou, more than yon mad fool, succeed?
Here canst thou to far better purpose bleed,
I must not throw away a single life,
All here are needed to maintain the strife!"

This episode delay'd for briefest space
Tilly's assault, yet gave a little grace,—



One word alone his voice in thunder peal'd.

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Much-needed breathing-time their ranks to form,
 Ere on the Swedes again burst forth the storm,—
 And now he comes, and Swedish hearts may quail;
 His onslaught never yet was known to fail!
 But hark! his own artillery's thunders roar
 On Tilly's flank, as downward Teufel bore
 Upon the Austrians with the captured guns,
 And through their ranks, misgiving, panic runs,
 Which needs but little more to end in rout,
 And while they waver swells a distant shout,
 Rolls the loud rattle of the Swedish drums,
 "Hurrah! the day is ours, Gustávus comes!"

"Ay,—'tis the King, with his victorious right!"
 Cried Eric: "see, in overwhelming might
 He bears down all resistance! General, see!
 On both their flanks the Austrians break and flee.
 Their centre must soon follow! let me then
 Charge at the head of but a score of men,
 If more thou canst not spare,—and I will try
 To avenge him,—ne'er shall it be said that I,
 That I a friend saw fall, and idle stood,—
 Upon my head would ever lie his blood!"
 "Go, then, since thou must have thine headstrong course,"
 Said Horn, "but take a troop of German horse!"

In vain with frantic, desperate energy
 Does Tilly, though himself despairing, try
 His ranks to rally, and avoid defeat,
 'Tis now too late for orderly retreat.
 Upon one flank Gustávus, conquering, wheel'd;
 His own lost cannon on the other peal'd
 Their loudest thunders,—belch'd their ceaseless shot,
 Honour and order, discipline forgot,

His panic-stricken regiments heed him not ;
For on their front advances Gustave Horn
Whose men the whole day long had patient borne
Their fiercest onslaughts—now their turn is come,
The trumpets sound, in thunder rolls the drum,
And on they charge—charge home—the Austrians run ;
The victory is gain'd—the field is won !

And Tilly ! he who ne'er had known defeat,
How did the ever-conquering leader meet
This new experience ? Chose he there to die,
Himself unconquer'd, though his veterans fly ;
Was he as calm, as dauntless, in that hour
That shatter'd all his fame—his vaunted power,
As he had ever been in victory ?
The soldier give his due—He meant to be,
And was—'twas not in him to fly the field,
He could not win—nor knew he how to yield.
Stern and determined, see him at the head
Of men as stern and brave, whom he had led
Ever to victory—*they* would now be true
Even to death—a grizzled, gallant few,
Veterans of many a hard contested day,
All, like their leader, grown in conquest gray,
With death familiar long, no fear they know,
They will not flinch from any mortal foe.
On them concentrated their own cannon play,
Advance they cannot, fast they melt away,
They may not stand and live, they will not turn,
All offers of surrender—quarter spurn.
In sheer amaze the Swedes before them halt,
In admiration, ev'n forbear to assault,
To slaughter such brave men ; but, while they wait,
Hoping they yet may yield, ere 'tis too late,

Again the shout of "Magdeburg" is heard:
"Remember Magdeburg!" as Eric spurr'd
Straight at Count Tilly with the German horse,
Out leap a score of warriors, bar the course,
With their own bodies break his onset's force,
The Swedes press in, soon are those veterans sped,
To the last man they fall—but Tilly fled.

The victory is complete: upon the field,
Among the dead and dying, Gustave kneel'd,
His soul in fervent thanks to Him outpour'd,
Who is the Lord of Hosts—Who guides the sword;
While Luther's grand old hymn of joy and praise,
"Now let us all thank God," the soldiers raise,
Far o'er the battlefield the strains resound,
Loud peal the joyous bells for miles around:
From every village, hamlet, steeple, rung,
Gustavus' praise is borne on every tongue;
For far and wide the countryside rejoices,
And wives' and mothers', maidens', children's voices
Unite, in glad thanksgiving, loud to sing
Praise to the Lord—Long live the Lutheran King!





BOOK VI.

The Betrothal of Eric and Hilda.

"RING out the peals on the frosty air!
Welcome with music the happy pair,
Hilda, fairest of the fair,
Eric, warrior tried!
In merry dance shall the mad bells swing,
And peal upon peal shall loudly ring.
Honour to the Swedish King,
Sound the trumpet wide!

"This shall be, neighbours, a festive day!
Trouble and toil we will cast away,
Labour shall give place to play,
Care, to feast and song!
The brimming goblets shall freely flow
We will our revels and mirth, I trow,
Heedless both of frost and snow
Into night prolong!"

It is Christmas-tide, and the scene is laid
At Traubeneck, where over the stream
Hangs the village church with its belfry tower,
But not as yet do the waters gleam;
The river is dark at this early hour—
Though the sun is up, and though its beam,

Cast over the hills, on their crests has play'd
And lighted them up with a rosy glow,
As though touch'd by a wand of enchanting power, •
To red gold changing the silver snow—
Though a ray is flung upon Hilda's bower
As if through her window it fain would go
To wake, and to welcome the happy maid.

And what the sunbeam fain would do,
As it shot its glance o'er the mountain top,
That would the merry ringers too,
They rung out their chimes as though never they'd stop ;
In spite of the cold of the biting rime
Lustily pealing in perfect time.
And when the hammers ceased their stroke
The trumpets' blast the echoes woke,
And tired arms to lungs gave way
As clarions shrill came into play—
And if the music was not skill'd
Its volume all the valley fill'd,
And if the players' tunes were rude
Their hearts were true as their wind was good—
Whatever might be wanting found
They more than made up there in sound.

“And why are now the joybells swinging
In the gray tower so madly to and fro?
And what betokens all this ringing,
Why do now the trumpets blow?”
“Can it be thou dost not know?
This is our Hilda's betrothal day,
That is why the trumpets play,
That is why the bells are ringing
In the gray tower madly swinging ;

Why, in spite of frosty air,
Gathers all the village there,
Rising earlier than the sun ;
To-day great things will here be done :
The Great Gustave, the Swedish King
Comes here from Mainz, his Queen will bring,
Himself will the betrothal grace,
And at the castle stay a space
The Magistrate's most gracious guest.
So, stranger, if thou art not press'd,
Here, in our village, stop and rest ;
Or to the belfry come with me
And I thy host this day will be,
Partake our flowing cups and cheer
And all the tale thou there shalt hear !”

Oh ! who does not love the sunny blue Rhine
Who its glories in summer enraptured has seen ?
Its steep rocky hills where blossoms the vine—
The flowing expanse fills the valley between.
We have seen it at noon, when the bright beams are dancing
On its broad silver'd face where the ripples are glancing,
When high from the heavens the sun his ray throws,
And the wavelets invite us to rest and repose
As we fling ourselves down on the fringe of the deep,
By its murmurings lull'd, to fall quickly asleep :
We have seen it at eve, and, enticed by its wave,
Have hasten'd our limbs in its waters to lave,
With its ripples have sported, and, borne on its breast,
Have fancied we were by its sirens caress'd,
So subtly the fluid around us did cling,
Stole over our senses the charm of the spell,
Enchanted, transported, we listen—they sing—
And we see their bright forms in the river's deep well,

And their lovely dark tresses in green tangled weed,
And their glancing white arms as they beckon us heed,
Till we cease to strike out, and motionless float,
Or dive under the wave to hear plainer their note.
Alas! the spell breaks, and we are alone,
The vision, the voices, the bright forms are flown:
We have seen it at sunset, when burnish'd like gold,
A volume of tribute to ocean it roll'd.
We have listen'd enthral'd to the nightingale's song,
Awaking in echoes the still summer night,
As by moonshine our boat glided calmly along,
And the hills and the river were bath'd in its light;
And later we've seen it, when but a faint glimmering
Showed to us, on the hills, the river's broad track,
And the stars in the water reflected, shimmering,
Their radiance again to the heavens gave back.
'Tis beautiful ever, whenever 'tis seen,
In the hot summer's noon, or at eve, or at night,
When the hillsides are clothed with luxuriant green,
Or when gilded with gold by the sun setting bright,
Or when lit up anew by the moon's pallid beam,
Or darken'd again at midnight the stream!
That its summer glories are matchless is true,
Yet the winter can show it in beauty too.

So Hilda thought as she awoke,
And from the window of the tower
Look'd forth, as now the sunbeam broke
With cheery welcome in her bower:
And lustily the chimes were rung,
And loud discordant trumpets bray'd,
Upon the trees the hoar-frost hung,
The twigs with feathery rime were spray'd,
The landscape all was wreathed in snow,
Dark was the river's rapid flow,

And on its leaden breast it bore,
As to the sea it downward tore,
With an incessant, grinding roar,
Huge blocks of ice, most grandly ridged,
Which in the narrows nearly bridged
The rushing stream from shore to shore.

The sky above was that dark deep blue,
The seldom seen transparent hue,
It seem'd one almost might see through
Into the Heaven beyond,—
And that the soul in longing flight
Might soar e'en higher than the sight,
Break earthly chains that hold it tight,
And burst its mortal bond.

But if such feelings Hilda knew
'Twas not to day that she felt their power,
Too much with the world had she to do,
And Eric was all in all that hour ;
Her present lot she would not exchange,
Nor higher to-day would her spirit range.
The deepest blue of the rarest sky
Had not the depth of Hilda's eye,
More golden than the sun her hair,
Whiter than snow her bosom fair,
And on her cheek was a redder rose
Than ever dawn on the mountain throws
What though the leaden waters roll
Their icy burden to the sea,
No shade was cast upon her soul,
No evil omen there could be.
The sunbeam in her bower that play'd
Paled at the sunshine in her heart,
Too happy was the joyous maid ;
To wish from her love and the world to part ;

For Heaven, as yet, would not be Heaven,
Earth was at present passing fair;
To Eric she her heart had given,
With him its pleasures she would share:
She looked on the sky, unspeck'd by a cloud,
And said to herself, pray'd partly aloud,
As her pulses throb'd in her ecstasy,
No cloud on her life there ever should be,
And as she looked was heard without
Her merry maidens' chanting shout.

"Rise, Hilda rise!

See, how the impatient sunbeam tries
To gain admittance to thy bower!
Awake! lest, sleeping at this hour,
His prying eye should thee surprise.

Rise, Hilda rise!

"Rise, Hilda rise!

'Tis Love himself that to thee cries
To open wide the castle door;
To keep him waiting grieves him sore,
The little god no maid denies.

Rise, Hilda rise!

"Rise, Hilda rise!

Great honour now before thee lies,
Thy guest is Gustave, Sweden's King,
His gift is thy betrothal ring!
The Queen her presence too supplies.

Rise, Hilda rise!

"Rise, Hilda rise!

The sun mounts upward in the skies,
And short is now the winter day,
Thy bridegroom is upon the way,
Fast to his true love's side he flies.

Rise, Hilda rise!"

Into her room they burst with glee
Thinking to find her still in bed,
Laughing and chatting merrily,
The maiden troop the old nurse led.
While from the belfry down below
Breaks out again a joyous chime,
And echoing far the trumpets blow,
In lusty, if not perfect, time.
Among her maids we Hilda leave,
Who deck her out in bright attire,
Fitting her lover to receive
With all that Beauty can desire,
And then proceed to decorate
The castle hall, the thrones of state
Placed there for Sweden's King and Queen,
With holly boughs and evergreen.
Nor royal guests, nor 'trothèd bride
Shall banish blessèd Christmastide!
Then, leaving them so well employ'd
With joys so pure and unalloy'd,
Back to the bell-tower we will go,
Down where the Rhine's swift waters flow.

A score of stalwart ringers there,
With their sleeves tuck'd up to the elbows bare,
In turn upon the bell-ropes swung.
Right merry were they as the chimes they rung :
And when their labours ceas'd at last
From man to man the wine-cup pass'd,
And naturally their gossip turn'd
On Hilda and her Swedish lover ;
And the youth's and the maiden's ears had burn'd,
But never yet could I discover,
That our ears must burn, by any token,
When pleasant things of us are spoken.

Although 'tis commonly believed,
And universally received,
It does not follow as a matter of course,
And did not, it seems, with our lovers hold force ;
Though they had good occasion I never yet learn'd
That Hilda's and Eric's ears all the day burn'd.

" 'Tis a gallant youth—I always said,"
Quoth old William, the ringer captain he,
" Him would the lady Hilda wed—
And I was right, as now ye see !
Let us drink to him and his bonny bride,
Our Hilda, the queen of the whole Rhine side !
This morn we rang in their betrothal day,
Not long from betrothal to bridal the way,
So mates, if we live, ere long we shall ring
A glad wedding peal with yet lustier swing :
I said, long before that night on the water,
The brave lad would win our Magistrate's daughter
Since then he has served with the Royal Swede,
Has ventured many a daring deed,—
A gallant husband he will make—
And here's to him for his own worth's sake ! "

" Ay, William, ay !—and friends, ye have heard,"
A ringer said, " at Leipzig's rout,
How hotly he after Tilly spurr'd,
And would have captured him no doubt ;
For he, and a Swedish captain led,
By many lengths, the fierce pursuit,
But the Swedish captain fell, shot dead,
Just as he thought to have grasp'd the fruit,
By seizing him to have crown'd the day,
Just then, it chanced, there came that way

Sax Lauenburg's Duke—the danger saw—
Was prompt his pistols both to draw.
One bullet pass'd through the captain's head,
And Eric's horse roll'd in the dust,
But not until his sword he had thrust
In Tilly's side, who bleeding fled,
And only just escaped, you see,
From the field where he first lost the victory."

"Ah!" said a third, "'Twas a glorious day;
But yet I am grieved we cannot claim,
Since the Saxons ran from the field away,
As Germans, share in Leipzig's fame."
"That matters nothing," old William replied,
"We are anyhow all on the Lutheran side!
Germans or Swedes, it is all the same,
We will not quarrel about the name:
To Gustavus the fame is entirely due—
We Germans are proud to fight under him too!
As Germans and Swedes united we'll thrive,
Fearing neither Pope, Kaiser, nor Devil, alive."

"He is indeed a most noble King,
And a noble peal we will to him ring!"
Another man cried. "I dare say you know
How he sent from the field our Rudolph away,
To ride as hard as he could go,
And carry to the Elector word
That he would yet retrieve the day.
Well, so fast had the Elector spurr'd,
So hurriedly the field forsaken,
He never had been overtaken,
Had he not stopped to quench his fear,
Or perhaps his thirst, with a draught of beer;

For the roads were dusty, the day was hot,
But his honour and fame, even duty, forgot,
He refused to return to the battle-field.

His men were all dispersed and fled,
He would to fate and the Kaiser yield,
Gustavus could not save the day.

The battle was lost, the Elector said,
He had better draw his troops away
In decent order, if he could,

The Saxon land evacuate,
And, were he wise, he also would
Make peace with Austria ere too late.

"'Twas at Eilenburg that this occur'd,
For so far had the Elector spurr'd
From the late scene of his defeat,

'Twas far into night ere he heard the news
That Gustave's victory was complete.

It *may be* full draughts of beer suffuse
Great courage in a craven's blood.

I cannot say if this be so;

I only know, I would face the foe

Much rather than meet again the man

From whose side I once ran, as the battle began!

But, whatever the cause, in its fullest flood,

His courage again to him return'd;

He rode back, dared himself present—

We might suppose the King had spurn'd

The coward turncoat from his tent.

Such treatment had he well deserved,

Who his life before all else preserved,

And when his life was safe next thought

To make his peace at the Austrian Court,

Left his ally to sink or swim,

And the Lutheran Cause—'twas the same to him.

But no; the noble-minded King,
Instead of blaming or censuring,
Thank'd there the Elector from his heart
For the good advice he did impart,
In that he urged him on to fight,
For, as he saw, it had turn'd out right.
When he comes, to the King so gallant and wise,
We will ring out a peal that shall rend the skies!"

"Ay, that will we!" the ringers cried,
"There is no better peal on the whole Rhine-side,
And old William, our captain, is wont to say
He would match his ringers any day
Against any others in the land,
Such pride has he in his well-train'd band!"
"And if it be true," old William replied,
"That ye ev'n be the best ringers far and wide,
When it comes to music I fear ye'd be cast,
For I can't say much for your trumpet-blast.
So lads, let us stick to our bells and our wine,
They are both far famed on the broad, brimming Rhine;
Let us drink to the health of the Swedish King,
For the deeper we drink we the better shall ring!"

They all with this sentiment quite agreed,
For 'tis wine that maketh a merry heart;
And a merry heart doth the ringer need,
How else can he properly play his part?
How could he ring out a right merry chime
If his heart were sorrowful all the time?
So they emptied their cups, refill'd to the brim,
And again and again they all toasted him,
As they vied with each other his deeds to recount,
For the wine was strong, and was apt to mount
Into the head and loosen the tongue;
Nigh as loud as their peals his praises rung.

"Gustavus was wise," cried the ringer again,
"To have nothing to do with the Saxon campaign !
For though Prague the Elector has lately taken
'Twas because the place was entirely forsaken ;
Nor was there a burgher would gird on his sword,
Or shoulder a pike for his Imperial lord,
So lukewarm were they in the Kaiser's cause :
'Twas at Prague, as ye know, the riots broke out,
And there first began these protracted wars ;
'Twas little the citizens cared about
Defending the town 'gainst a Lutheran force :
They yielded it quite as a matter of course.
All Bohemia by now should already be won,
And the Austrian lands should be overrun ;
But it seems the Elector is loth to fight,
And stands much in awe of the Kaiser's might ;
For he fears to press on, nor will forward go,
Though short of Vienna, he'll find no foe."

"Gustavus had now never pierced so far,
Nor had the Bishops before him fled,
Had he too carried on the war
Like Saxony," old William said.
"*He* does not lag upon the way,
Scarce had he heard of Leipzig's day
Ere Wuerzburg's Bishop found the King
At Koenigshofen thundering,
He had barely time to escape into France,
So rapid was the King's advance.
The Marienberg by storm he took,
And the town, which its Catholic lord forsook,
Surrender'd at once, for the Wuerzburgers fear'd
To draw down on themselves Gustavus' wrath,
For Tilly, who again had ventured forth
With re-organised troops, and Aschaffenburg near'd,

Was order'd to beat a hasty retreat ;
No other army had Austria now,
And fatal indeed were another defeat,
So Maximilian would not allow
His General to try his fortune again :
And worse was the fate of the Duke of Lorraine ;
He was foolish enough to dare to try
Conclusions with Gustavus' might,
His holiday troops were glad to fly
Ere ever the Swedes were well in sight.
To pillage and rob they were brave indeed,
Defenceless women they did not heed,
To the peasant and burgher bold front they could show,
But the veteran Swedes were a different foe,
From them it were safer by far to run,
They were all agreed, and it soon was done !”

“ And the Duke was among the first to fly,
And, William—my tale is true I know—
As a fair Rhine village he gallop'd by
A peasant struck at his horse a blow,
And jeeringly cried : ‘ Ride faster, my lord ;
In truth thou must even yet faster ride,
If thou wouldst retain thine unflesh'd sword,
And thou'lt need it to plunder the country side ;
Behind thee already the horsehoofs ring,
'Twill be hard to escape from the Swedish King !”

‘ Yes,” said another, “ he hurried home
As fast, if not faster than he had come ;
But yet for all that he was still too late,
For no man can ride quite as fast as fate.
And on reaching home, astonish'd, he found
That the Frenchman was lording it all around,

He had better by far have stuck to his own,
 He had done quite as well to have left us alone ;
 That *he's* better off than when he set out
 On his raid upon women and children I doubt !”

“Better off or not,” old William went on,
 “His lands has the wily Frenchman won ;
 He was a fool to think he could stop
 With his puny arm the mighty Swede,
 Or consider himself a sufficient prop
 For the tottering bishops in their need :
 Gustavus simply brush'd him away
 As the dew disappears on a summer's day,
 And pursued his road with resistless force,
 Following the Main-stream's winding course.
 At every town, and every place,
 He needed but to show his face,
 At once their gates wide open flew,
 The Imperial garrisons withdrew,
 And cross'd the Rhine in reckless haste,
 Nor freely breathed till they had placed
 Its mighty flood as a barrier sure
 Between them and Gustavus, and then felt secure,
 As though the King, who had cross'd the sea,
 By any river would bounded be !

“Frankfort alone made show of demur,
 And seemed inclined at first to refuse
 To open her gates when he summon'd her,
 But she very soon found it would be no use
 To attempt to deny the Swedish King,
 She soon had to yield to his summoning.
 ‘I am much surprised,’ the Hero cried,
 As the deputies sent still objections made,

‘That ye should ever place side by side
Your Lutheran Faith and your paltry trade!
Ye should rise above such sordid cares,
Nor speak to me of your markets and fairs;
For Commerce and Gain can little avail
When Religion and Freedom sink in the scale.’
Then added he, in an angrier tone,
‘This war is yours, even more than mine own;
For the Protestant Church, for your Country’s weal,
In arms before your gates I stand.
My Cause is righteous, as ye must feel,
And yet ye refuse me a helping hand;
From Rugen hither I have fought my way,
And of every place I have found the keys;
My further course ye shall not stay,
Yield, or withhold them, as ye please!’

“With this he sent the burghers back,
But follow’d closely on their track:
His forces, drawn up in their battle array,
He halted just before the gate,
To hear what the Council had now to say.
And truth he had not long to wait:
The Council had no other course
Than to yield at once to this show of force,
Of which they could make abundant use,
If later on they should need excuse,
With the Austrian Court, for their conduct, though
They were not sorry to exchange, I trow,
The Imperial tyranny that day,
For the Great Gustavus’ milder sway.

“In perfect order through the town
The King his veteran army led,

The people wondering look'd down
From every window overhead ;
Such discipline was never seen,
Such conqueror there had never been.
But the King did not in the town delay,
But, passing through, kept on his way,
And ere the sun had set that day
The fortified town of Hoechst had won.
Down to the Rhine he still pushed on,
Encamp'd himself before the walls
Of Cassel, and prepared to cross
Over to Mainz ; while Bernard falls—
Bernard of Weimar, I mean—in force
Upon Ehrenfels on the river side ;
And he captured it and the Mouse Tower, too,
Castles in which were wont to hide
The Archbishops of Mainz, for their lives afraid,
Whenever their people unruly grew ;
And the Landgrave William a junction made
Of his troops with the King's, to his compact true,
Most successfully he with the foe had striven,
And the Austrians all from his lands had driven.

“But, just as the King was ready to cross,
With his own, combined with the Landgrave's force,
To besiege the town, the news was brought
That Tilly by rapid marches sought
Nuernberg to surprise, and take by storm,
Ere he could come to the city's aid :
The King did not stop his plans to form,
But return'd at once, and was only afraid
Lest he should happen to come too late,
And the town should have suffer'd Magdeburg's fate,
Her cruel sack, and her fearful brand.
But, ere he reach'd Frankfort, already he heard

Nuernberg was making a gallant stand,
And at that city they brought him word
That the rumour indeed was happily true,
And that Tilly, foil'd, from the walls withdrew

"Ah," cried a ringer, "the Magistrate's care
Had been beforehand with Tilly there
To his advice it was chiefly owing
That the walls had been kept in good repair,
And the ditches filled to overflowing,
And the cannon mounted upon the towers:
The city was safe from any surprise,
And Tilly had wasted a good many hours,
Had used up his shot, and all his supplies,
Ere he had batter'd a single gate,
For the strength of the walls was far too great;
And his heaviest guns he had left behind,
Hoping the place unprepared to find,
Little thinking the burghers would show such fight.
Ay, he had been in a sorry plight
Had he waited there till the King came up.
Come mates, and pass round the flowing cup;
Long life to the Magistrate let us drink.—
Ye will pledge me my toast to the brim, I think!
May he live the end of these wars to see,
And his great grandchildren upon his knee."
In bumper o'erflowing the toast they drain,
And lustily cheer him again and again,
But the noise subsides with the toasting done,
And then old William at length went on.

"Well, stranger, since thou fain wouldst know
How the course of the war did onward go,
I do not mind if I even tell,
As far as I can, how it befell

That the Great Gustavus comes hither a space
Our Lady Hilda's betrothal to grace ;
It will serve to pass the time away
While here in the belfry we must stay.
Well, let me see, I was going to say,
When the King, on reaching Frankfort, learn'd
 Nuernberg already herself had freed,
His march to the Rhine again he turn'd,
 By a different road, with the utmost speed ;
On its banks he appear'd for the second time,
At Erlangen, just above Oppenheim :
And there it was the event occur'd
 That brings us to-day a Royal Guest.
And can it be that thou hast not heard ?
 Well, pass round the cup, and I'll tell the rest.

 ' In the face of the foe
 The King, as ye know,
Almost reckless courage is wont to show ;
 It is ever his care
 To do and to dare,
If his troops thereby he may anyways spare :
And that, since ye ask, is the reason why
We Swedes for our King to a man would die.'

Well has he earn'd, the noble King,
This chorus that his soldiers sing,—
And what they sing they truly mean,
It is no idle vaunt, I ween !
They had proved it there on Leipzig's day,
For never a man had run away,
And because they scorn'd to fly they gain'd
The field which their life-blood else had stain'd :
And on this occasion Eric proved
That he could die for the King he loved.

Gustavus and he, with Rudolph to guide,
In a crazy pair-oar'd fisherman's boat,
Had ventured across to the other side,
For the King was determined in person to note
The lay of the land on the Rhine's left shore,
Himself the opposite bank to explore,
Where best a landing might be made,
And the current itself might the crossing aid.
When they had been some time afloat,
Moor'd to the bank they left their boat,
And, seeing no sign of a hostile band,
They ventured further from the strand,
But hardly had they left the shore
When a Spanish troop down on them bore :
'Run for your lives,' Gustavus cried,
''Twere vain against such odds to fight !
Our boat, that floats upon the tide,
See ! yonder fellows rush to seize,
And we must speed with all our might,
With it our hope of safety flees !'
Already the foremost Spaniard's hand
Was laid on the rope the boat that moor'd,
As Gustave now regain'd the strand ;
One moment flash'd the Hero's sword,
Flash'd high in the air above his head,
The next on the soldier's helmet fell ;
Defenceless the steel as a fragile shell,
And the Spaniard dropp'd in the water dead,
For the helm was cleft, and his skull as well.

"At once into the boat they sprang,
Eric and Rudolph seized each an oar
To push the shallop away from shore.
Loud Spanish shouts of triumph rang,

In another moment the boat they'll reach,
For her keel sticks fast upon the beach :
'Tis vain to push, she will not move.

'Twas then that Eric leapt over the side
And, with a resolute, powerful shove,
Sent the vessel adrift far down the tide,
Crying out to Rudolph not to wait,
For this once not to heed the King's command.
His case was by no means desperate,

Though the Spaniards already had lined the strand,
But to row with speed out of musket shot,
That he could swim over he doubted not,
There was nothing to fear but the icy cold,
And his blood was hot, and his heart was bold.

"Quickly he wades through the shallow water
Till the eddies gurgles beneath his chin ;
And, however much they thirsted for slaughter,
Not a Spaniard cared to venture in.
Deliberately, then, in the sight of his foes,
His boots, his buffcoat, to the river he throws ;
Ere over the waters their muskets rung,
Before ever a Spaniard his weapon unslung,
Before they quite knew what he was about,
He dived in the flood and boldly struck out :
The wintry torrent soon bore him away

Out of the range of their furthest piece.
Too late do the marksmen their skill display,
As the bullets drop short they fain must cease ;
And their rage finds its vent in the fiercest cries,
As they see him escape right under their eyes.
They are more enraged when they hear what a prize
Has just miss'd their grasp, when they realise
That the Great Swedish King was so nearly their prey
And Gustavus himself had escaped that day.

While Eric was boldly breasting the wave
The King was intent his life to save ;
In that ice-cold flood, full well he knew,
The strongest swimmer must soon be spent :
Close up to him fast the boat they drew,
And to pull him in o'er the gunwale leant ;
It could not be done, they soon discern'd,
The crazy skiff would be overturn'd.
But Eric call'd out to them to throw him
The rope by which the boat they moor,
Holding on by his teeth, they could quickly tow him
In safety to the opposite shore.
Thus they escaped, I am happy to say,
And thou know'st why the King comes hither to-day.

"Gustavus leapt out, throwing down his oar,
Ere they had hardly reach'd the shore,
And, wet and dripping as he stood,
Clasp'd Eric fondly to his breast ;
As he wrung his hand, his gratitude,
His looks, even more than his words, express'd.
He is never too proud to sink the King,—
The accident of birth he holds
Is not in itself an ennobling thing,—
And his equals in heroes, the Hero beholds.
But while Gustave remembers he is but man,
Men never forget that he is 'the King' ;
His features, his figure, you've only to scan,
And the mind is recall'd from its wandering :
For Majesty shines in his kindly face,
In his every movement the Monarch we trace.

"The King was loud in Eric's praise :
'Twas what he most rejoiced to find,

When doubt unlook'd-for perils raise—
The quick resolve, the present mind.
'But this is not thy first adventure,'
He bantering said, 'upon the Rhine.
And if we would escape her censure,
The Queen must see this Hilda thine!
What sayest thou, Eric, shall we go
To Traubeneck this Christmastide?
She will be there, I chance to know,
And some one's fate will then decide.
Ay, lad, we'll come, and I will bring,
Nay, blush not, a betrothal ring.—
Let it be my gift to thee; thou'lt know
Full well what to do with the ring, I trow!
But come, for much time have we lost,
This day the river must be cross'd!'

"And cross'd it was, and a passage won
Ere had set that day the December sun!
Upon two barges three hundred Swedes
To the opposite bank Count de Brahè leads;
But no sooner had he got safely across
Than he was attack'd in o'erwhelming force
By fourteen squadrons of Spanish horse,
Cuirassiers and dragoons, who upon him fell

Before he had time to entrench his command:
But de Brahè defended himself so well,

Making with his three hundred so gallant a stand,
That he gain'd time enough for the Swedish King
Over the river, in person, to bring
Reinforcement sufficient to turn the scale;
For, led by their King, they could not fail,
And Spanish numbers could nought avail
Against Swedish valour, and Gustave's skill,

So, leaving behind six hundred dead,
It was not long ere the troopers fled,
To Oppenheim some, but in panic still
The remainder press'd on in their flight, until
The yet stronger fortress of Mainz they had gain'd,
There first their jaded steeds they rein'd,
Spread through the town the Hero's fame,
And heighten'd the terror of Gustave's name.

"On the Rhine's left bank soon the army stood,
With its cannon transported across the flood,
And the fugitive Spaniards found to their sorrow
That Oppenheim's walls were a poor defence.
When the town was won by assault on the morrow,
So crying in these lands was the evidence
Of the hatred that Spain towards the Lutherans bore,
Of the barbarous way she conducted the war,
That the Swedes, indeed, may be more than excused
If, in storming the place, they quarter refused,
And half a thousand corpses show
Their vengeance on the Spanish foe.
However terrible the slaughter,
Howe'er hard it might seem to refuse them quarter,
It was but a righteous recompense
For devils' deeds that would even incense,
To flaming wrath, Heaven's mildest saint,
And Hell's blackest stains would yet deeper taint.
For such wretches as these in their direst need
Nor Pity, nor Mercy herself, could plead!

"Oppenheim was taken—the King press'd on
To Mainz, and summon'd the garrison,
The Elector had already fled

To Cologne with his treasure some time ago,
Unwilling, like most of his fellows, to shed
One drop of his blood, or to face the foe,
And the town, of its Ruler's presence bereft,
In the hands of a Spanish commander was left.
For the first three days he boldly held out,
And a hot cannonade from the ramparts threw,
But his ultimate fate was never in doubt,
For closer and closer the trenches drew ;
And, just as the Swedes made ready to storm,
The Spaniard his flag of defiance haul'd down,
His defence, so he said, was a matter of form,
For the citizens' sake he surrender'd the town.
No longer did he the King's summons reject,
And received from Gustave what he scarce could expect,
Free pass through the lines, and with honours of war
Was to Luxemburg safely allow'd to withdraw.

"Gustavus took up his residence
In the Elector's palace in the town he had won,
And the sweets his Swedes experience
Of hard-earn'd rest now the campaign is done.
For eighteen months they had kept the field,
But there now was no foe against whom to wield
Any longer the sword for the Lutheran Right,
Since the Spaniards had everywhere taken to flight ;
And the dead of winter afforded leisure
To recruit their strength, and, in moderate measure,
To yield themselves up to feasting and pleasure,
With joyous hearts, this glad Christmastide ;
Since their conquering arms have indeed secured
Peace and goodwill on the whole Rhine side—
Our Rights and our Liberties now are assured !
Our Freedom and Faith at last are our own,

No longer dictated to us from the throne !
The Catholics, too, in our midst may dwell,
Our brethren's conscience we would not compel."

" But shall we still independence retain,
Or shall we pass under the Swedish yoke ?
No doubt it were lighter than that of Spain,
Or the Austrian rule that has well nigh broke
The ancient spirit throughout the land,
Keeping down our Rights with an iron hand.
Gustavus the Lutheran Champion we hail,
But what will us Germans his triumph avail ?
Our Lutheran Freedom we gain at high price
If our country thereto we must sacrifice ! "

" Nay, of that there's no fear ! " old William replied,
" But Sweden to Germany will be allied.
Gustavus, the Lutheran, will overthrow
The Austrian House, our inveterate foe ;
And then, no doubt, out of gratitude,
All the German States will elect the King—
Though Gustave his claims will never obtrude,
To him the Imperial Crown we will bring.
He will free us for ever from Rome, and from Spain,
Will set up our ancient boundaries again.
From the frozen seas of his own wild North,
Where the whirlpools congeal even round the Pole,
The Lutheran fiat shall thunder forth,
The Lutheran Kaiser rule over the whole :
All the Teuton races his sway shall own,
All their princes pay homage before his throne :
And over us all united he'll reign,
Over German and Swede, over Dutchman and Dane,
And the better our Lutheran might to combine
He will set up his throne on the broad, brimming Rhine."

"'Tis easy to talk," the ringer broke in,
"And airy castles are quickly built!
Ere a final triumph the King can win
Torrents of blood must yet be spilt;—
And then—even then, how do we know
That Saxony would his claim forego?
Of the German Lutherans he is the head,
Gustavus his Kaiser he could not brook;
'Twixt Lutherans then would blood be shed.
'Tis as plain as a page of an open book!
But were he content, would Wallenstein,
Who has bearded ere now the Kaiser's power
See this empire rising upon the Rhine,
And stand sullenly idle, as at this hour?
He, who upon earth would fain be a god,
Who bids armies spring up at his slightest nod.
Alas, and alas! from peace and goodwill,
I fear very much we are distant still!"

"Well," said old William, "it may even so be—
Then must we submit to Heaven's decree!
But, whatever may hap, we Lutherans know
Gustavus will guard us against the foe;
Our Rights and our Liberties he will maintain,
Religion and Freedom shall flourish again;
And the world shall yet see a Lutheran Rhine
Where plenty shall reign both in corn and in wine.
But, hark! there goes the signal gun—
Gustavus' barge must be in sight!
Ay, see! its oars sparkle in the sun
Like a row of flashing diamonds bright.
So friends, we must hasten the wine to drink up,
And well nigh empty is now the cask,
Pass quickly round the last brimming cup,
For we must again to our joyous task;

On the bell-ropes must we lustily swing,
Our loudest peals will we merrily ring
To worthily welcome Gustavus the King!"

'Tis midday now, and the winter sun
The half of his shorten'd course has run :
Full on the river his beams are shed,
Changing to silver the sullen lead,

And, glittering bright, huge blocks of ice
Shine in his rays with the jacinth's red,

Or as giant rubies of unknown price.

But, floating onward down the stream,

They sail from sunlight into shade,

And, see, the ruby flashes fade

As the amber tints of the topaz gleam,

And the violet amethyst comes into view,

And the opal's pale translucent hue,

The turquoise, too,

With its deeper blue,

And the emerald green,

Each and all are seen

Where the glow of the jacinth and ruby had been.

Above, a sapphire sky is spread,

Relieved by an orb of molten gold,

Like a lake of pearl is the river's bed,

A gem-studded sea of wealth untold,

Shut in by frosted silver walls

Where the sunshine on the hill-side falls.

The mountains, the river, the sky, unite,

Lit up by the wintry sunbeam's light,

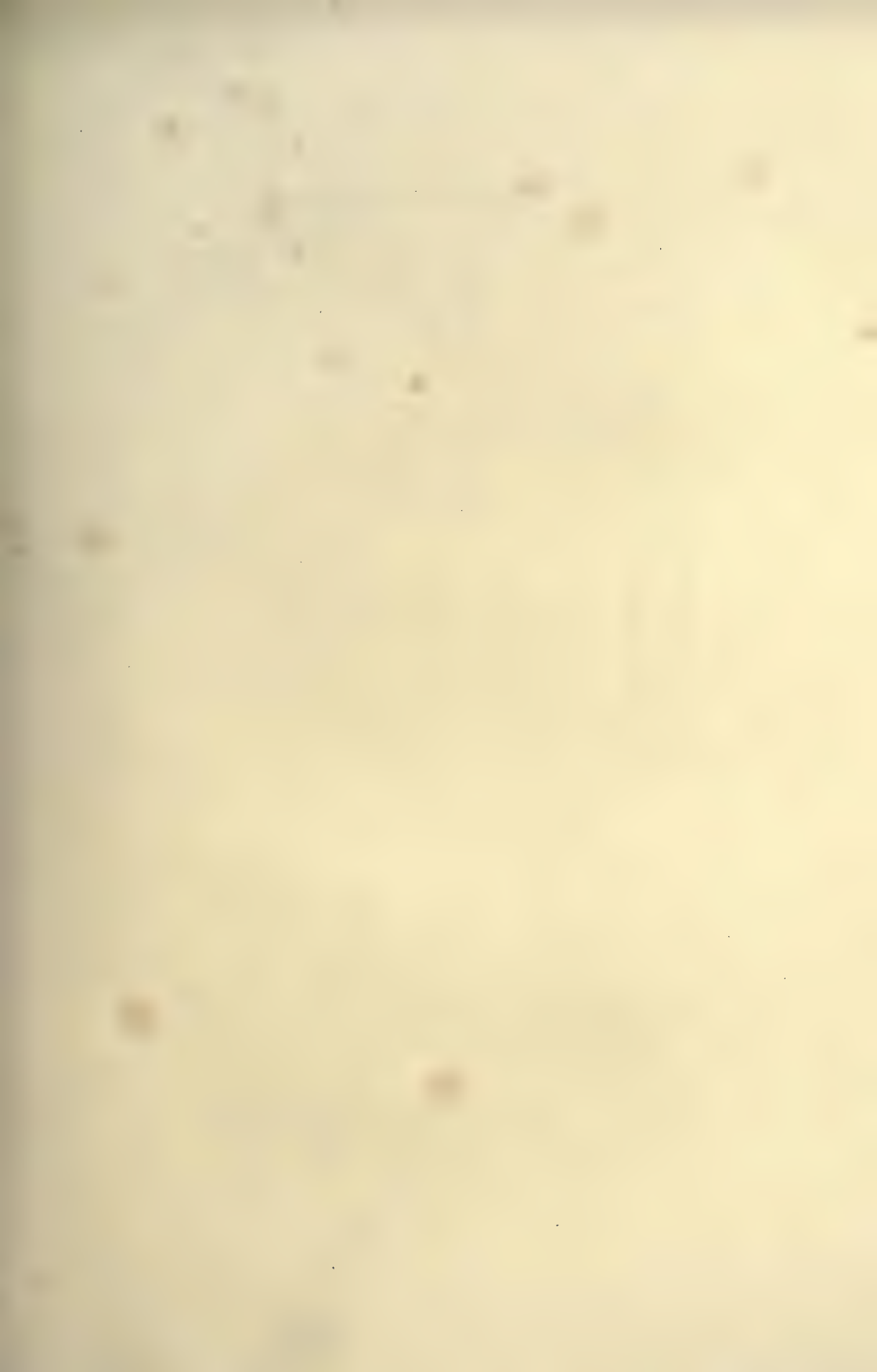
And the crystallised snow 's reflected white,

To form a most dazzling fairy scene,

As beautiful, though in a different way,

As when fringed in summer by the vine's bright green,

The waters sparkle in golden ray.





Hilda look'd down from her maiden bower
Upon the bright, bejewell'd Rhine.

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And now from the Traubeneck landing stair
A boat pushes out on the gem-laden stream,
And Rudolph and Eric—ay, Eric is there—
Propel the light skiff with most dext'rous care,
Avoiding those masses of ice that gleam
With the ruby's glow and the emerald's light,
And shape their course where the diamonds flash,
From the oars of the barge, in the sunshine bright,
As Traubeneck's bells all together clash,
Hammering a welcome of mighty sound
Which shakes the old tower from its vane to the ground;
And then break out the loudest peals
That ever yet over the Rhine were flung—
What reck they though the belfry reels,
Yet louder and louder the bells are rung;
For this is no common holiday,
The great Gustavus comes this way.
And whether owing to the clear; crisp air,
Or, as William said, to the generous wine,
Or the high-strung nerves of the listeners there,
Awaiting the King by the brimming Rhine—
To whatever cause it might even be due,
Some said, and, indeed, they were not a few,
That the bells themselves who was coming knew—
The only true hero since first they were hung
Long centuries since—even said, they swung
Of their own accord, and his welcome rung;
It was certain at least, all who heard them did own,
They had ne'er had before such a musical tone.

Hilda look'd down from her maiden bower
Upon the bright, bejewell'd Rhine,
Her casement she oped in Traubeneck's tower,
But she look'd not where the diamonds shine

On the dripping blades of the royal oars,
Nor saw the fast advancing barge,
Nor the river flowing 'twixt silver shores,
Nor yet the gathering concourse large;
Or, if she saw, she did not note—
Though her gaze was fix'd on Eric's boat,
The maiden's soul was far remote.
For some sweet moments she had been
Clasp'd by her soldier-lover's arm,
Her lover whom she had not seen
Since that glad night when her wild alarm,
To herself, as well as to him, betray'd
The havoc that Love with her heart had made—
For some sweet moments his whispers she heard
As, blushing, she hung in his embrace,
And treasured up there each endearing word,
Each seal'd with a kiss upon her face.
Such moments to a lifetime grow,
Such memories have eternal flow,
Such kisses e'en in Heaven will glow!

What wonder, then, that Hilda's soul
Pass'd far away from her own control?
What wonder that the maiden's mind
Was not by pageantry confined?
What wonder that Gustave the King,
And Elinore, his gracious Queen,
Whose advent now the glad peals ring,
Were quite forgotten, and the scene
Afar outspread to her fix'd gaze
Was enveloped in a summer haze?
It was not midwinter's mantling snow
That the maiden saw in the vale below,
Nor yet the rime-frost's feathery spray,
Nor the fairy light of December's day;

The hills were clothed in a vesture of green,
The woods in their fullest spring glory were seen,
The wavelets rippling in sunlight danced,
For Hilda at length was quite entranced.
She saw a skiff on the river afloat,
But it was not the King of Sweden's boat ;
She heard a low and a murmuring sound
As of water plashing upon the ground,
But it was not the hum of the multitude
Who thronging about the landing stood ;
'Twas the rivulet's ceaseless monotone
As it bubbled a music entirely its own.
Deserted, too, was the crowded beach,
In so far as Hilda's eye could reach ;
Instead of all the village there,
Men, and women, and children fair,
Wander'd alone a youthful pair,
Who stopp'd—not to listen to swinging chimes,
But to passing boatman's simple rhymes,
To his own true love in loud chorus address'd,
Echo'd over to them on the river's broad breast.

“ Together we'll stem life's surging tide,
Sail over its rapids fast ;
Nought will I fear with thine arm to guide,
Thy loving look on me cast ! ”

She watch'd the boat sail down the stream,
And strove to still her beating heart—
Round the point it vanish'd ; yet her dream
Of that happy summer would not depart.
She trod again each well-known walk
With Eric ever at her side,
She listen'd to her lover's talk,
And, though she often would deride,

She fear'd that her heart was no longer her own,
That her love into Eric's safekeeping had flown:
And, as oft as recurr'd the boat-maiden's song,
She felt she had loved him all along.

But why was that love then unconfess'd,
Or scarcely breathed to her inmost soul?
Why sought she to smother within her breast
A part, if she could not smother the whole?
Why, through that long, glad summertide,
Did the maiden still her secret hide?—
Why hides the cloud the sun's blest light?
Why does the day give place to night?
Why are the skies not always bright?
How does the hard and frozen ground
Each year, as soon as the spring comes round,
To genial showers and warmth give way,
And yield to the sun's imperious sway?
How into leaf do the trees burst out,
And what clothes the earth in her vesture of green?
'Twere easier far to answer, no doubt,
Such questions as these, than the first, I ween;
And yet, methinks, thy philosophy
Would be puzzled, indeed, to answer why!
Then wouldst thou dare, who canst not solve
The mysteries that e'en these involve,
To probe the pure and sacred springs
Deep hidden in a maiden's breast—
Presume to trench on hallow'd things
Scarce to her virgin soul confess'd?
Man has done much and may do more;
To fix and state each settled law,
And mark out the unvarying grooves
In which recurring nature moves;

But the why and the wherefore he cannot tell,
However presumptuous thereon he may dwell,
From nature her secrets he cannot compel;
And far more vainly wilt thou try
Into a maiden's heart to pry,
For what she fully does not know,
E'en were she willing, she could not show,
But he were indeed an arrant fool
Who should think that Love could be brought to rule.

Love is on earth the mightiest power
As in Heaven 'twill be the purest joy;
Without Love's aye-enduring dower
Eternity full soon would cloy.
Its empire Love will not resign.
How can man in his short life expect
Its restless volume to confine,
To the narrow range of his intellect?
It is vaster than a shoreless sea,
Boundless like space its immensity,
More varying than the changing wind,
For Love no standard canst thou find!
The youth who a maid true homage would pay
Must allow her to love in her own sweet way.
Then ask no more why Hilda's love
Was so long within herself suppress'd;
Be satisfied that it will prove
Once gain'd, eternally confess'd.
The mountain torrent soon runs dry
Though in boiling flood it thunders by,
But the mighty river's stream is slow,
For ever and ever unceasing its flow.

Her grandmother's voice the maiden awakes
From the memories sweet of that summer gone by,

On her tranced raptures the present breaks,
And Hilda starts up half timid and shy.
"Come, Hilda, see, at the landing-place,
The royal barge is mooring now ;
The King and the Queen condescend to grace
Hilda, my love, thy betrothal vow !
No longer mayest thou, child, delay,
Bethink thee, whatever would Eric say,
Should the King arrive at Traubeneck's tower,
And Hilda were hiding within her bower ?
He would hardly, my child, for such shyness as this
Reward thee again with a lover's kiss !
And scarcely couldst thou title claim,
Wert thou to his King in thy duty remiss,
To the hallow'd, the sacred, the holy name
Of a true-hearted youth's betrothèd bride,
The crowning glory of maiden's pride !
And it is not often the matron feels,
As wife or as mother, so near to Heaven,
As the maid, when her vow the compact seals,
And her trusting heart to her love is given ;
For wrapt in her babe is the mother's joy,
And a husband's love cannot raise the wife,
If earthly alone, to a happier life :
But in virgin love there is no alloy,
'Tis the nearest approach to perfect bliss !
One only exception thereto do I know,
And I pray Heaven grant my grandchild this,—
A wedded life whose tranquil flow
Is one long courtship carried through,
Husband and wife to each other true,
Each in the other's being living,
Two souls united in one mind,
To each other all their treasures giving,
Who in each other hope to find,

As here on earth, so there in Heaven,
The Ideal Love for which they have striven.
And Heaven will grant a widow's prayer,
Whose earthly heaven was all too short,
What thy father and I have miss'd—may our share,
In doubled portion, to thee be brought!
And, Hilda, mayst thou never know
The bitter and enduring woe,
When o'er their firstborn's cradle shed,
The widow's tears of anguish flow
As the young mother mourns his father dead,
Knowing weary years must pass ere her love
She shall meet again in the Heaven above.

"But enough of the past,—this is not the day
A sorrow that is fifty years old to renew.
Come child, to the hall must we hasten away—
Great cause have I even for thankfulness too!
Thy father and I may, indeed, sweet, rejoice
That his daughter hath made so happy a choice:
That Heaven hath sent from a far-distant land
Such a true-hearted youth to claim, love, thine hand,
That our fondly-loved Hilda's betrothal ring
Is the gift of Gustavus, the Lutheran King:
May *he*, too, the Germans and Swedes unite
In enduring bonds of resistless might;
And the Lutheran Faith will be then as secure
As is, Hilda, I trust, thy happiness sure."

In Traubeneck's hall is a pretty sight,
As through the stain'd window the sunbeam falls,
Illumining with the rainbow's light,
In varied tints the ancient walls;
But not *them* to view did the sun's warm ray
Linger now, as though loth to pass away;

The very same hues it might see any day—
It had only to peep, and, behold, they were there ;
At hide and seek with them it could play
As oft as it list on the carved oak stair,
And chase them about on the panelled wall,
On the floor, on the ceiling, of Traubeneck's hall :
Nor was it to gaze on the Christmas tree,
Though that was indeed a pretty sight,
With presents beneath it for every degree,
To the juvenile mind the chief delight :
Not the decorations to criticise,
Nor the monster branches of evergreen,
Closing in the hall like a forest screen—
There was nothing in them to excite its surprise ;
For every Christmas the same might be seen,
Or varied but little in any way,
There was nothing therein to induce it to stay ;
For in every castle and ancient hall,
Throughout the breadth of the German land,
On a similar scene would the sunbeam fall,
Christmas trees and fir branches on every hand.

But in Traubeneck's hall was another sight,
A bevy of beautiful damsels bright,
In festive array of pure virgin white ;
And clustering round a maiden they stand
Who in peerless beauty transcends them all :
Well *may* the sunbeam on the queen of the band,
In sheer admiration, on Hilda fall !
For so dainty her form, so lovely her face,
So bewitching her air of surpassing grace,
As coyly expectant the maiden stood,
Shy and retiring her attitude,
Though a love-light shone in her eager blue eye,
Which her blushing shyness did somewhat belie,

The sunbeam might search every castle and hall,
Even then on her equal it never would fall!
But list! the swell of music breaks
 Upon the excited maiden's ears,
The corridor's loud echo wakes
 As now the Royal party nears,
And boys' and girls' sweet voices ring
Hymning a welcome to the King:

"All hail to the Lutheran King of the North,
 Let his praise burst forth!
For he has cross'd over the stormy sea,
His brethren from Rome's dread fetters to free;
For he heard their cry in extremity,
And fear'd not to brave, the Lutherans to save,
 Even Austria's wrath!

"Boldly he risk'd all his treasure, his crown,
 And bearded the frown
Of the vengeful Pope, and the Jesuits' power;
Nor heeded the threatening black thunder-cloud's lower,
For God is his Refuge, his Fortress, his Tower:
And for Luther's cause in Religion's wars
 Would he life lay down.

"And, therefore, to him, the Champion of Heaven,
 The victory's given!
And God, in accordance with His promised word,
The prayers of His suffering people hath heard,
And the foe, who His wrath, and His vengeance incur'd,
Has again and again, but yet ever in vain,
 With the Hero striven.

“And hail to his noble and truehearted Queen!
Whom the world has seen
Following her lord, a devoted, true wife,
Bringing o'er reinforcements to aid in the strife,
Regardless of ease as he's careless of life:
Ne'er before such a King, whose praises we sing,
Has there ever been!”

The singing ceased, and Gustave now
Entered, his Consort by his side;
The maiden throng low bending bow,
And Hilda, too, is glad to hide
Her burning face, for joyous shame,
For the great Gustavus calls her by name:
“Hilda,” he said, “Thy brother I've known
Some long time past, and thy father too,
Both father and son to our Cause are true!
Thou only now remain'st alone—
Our hostess we met at the castle gate.
For introduction we need not wait!
And, maiden! thou wilt not take it amiss
If I ev'n introduce myself with a kiss,
For Eric has been before me, I wis.
Elinore! what think'st thou now of his choice?
The youth is as daring in Love as in War!
And Hilda, for his sake must I rejoice,
For a lovelier prize I never yet saw,
Excepting, of course, mine own true love;
As great a blessing to him mayst thou prove
As my Elinore ever to me has been!
Let me, maiden, present thee now to the Queen.”

The Queen the blushing girl embraced,
And in a moment won her heart;

Her gentle beauty her shyness effaced,
And bade her fluttering fears depart.
Though the loving words that she spoke were few,
The maiden felt they were all sincere,—
For her woman's heart the true woman knew,—
And express'd her thanks in a grateful tear,
As the Queen kiss'd again her forehead fair,
And stroked back the waves of her golden hair,
Till Hilda wonder'd what it was
That made her the centre of so much love.
Fair lady, wouldst thou know the cause?
Wouldst thou a living loadstone prove?
Believe me, it is not in gay attire,
Nor in beauty, nor wealth, nor in flashing wit!
Beauty may kindle fond desire,
And gold may minister to it,
And dress may heighten female grace,
And sparkling wit the soul adorn,
But unless Love breathes on a maiden's face,
Unselfish Love, Heaven's child, first born,
Suffusing there, though in fainter charm
Than when Eve, encircled by Adam's arm,
First lured down its light to the world below,
Still a trace of Eden's heavenly glow;—
Unless Love shines in a maiden's eye
All other gifts are bestow'd in vain!
Beauty must fade, and wealth may fly,
But the Love-light there will ever remain!
Then, lady, if thou hast it not,
Pray Heaven thou mayest it yet attain.
Search in thy soul—is Self forgot?
It must be ere thou the prize canst gain,
Then, though beauty—wealth fail, true Love is thine own,
'Twill be more than enough to suffice thee alone!

When the greetings were over, the Magistrate
His royal visitors forthwith led
To the daïs, whereon were the thrones of state.
And brightly still the sunbeam shed,
Patient, as though 'twould for ever wait
Till the vows of betrothal were duly said,
Its tinted rays through the festive hall,
Lighting the evergreens on the wall.
The maiden band was arranged full soon
In a curving line, rather more than half-moon :
Within this semi-circle's space,
To which the daïs formed a base,
Hilda and Eric now took their place
Facing the thrones ; while at Eric's side,
But a little in front, the Pastor stood,
And Rudolph behind him the 'spousal viewed.
Her father, grandmother, supported the bride
Who now was to give to Eric her troth,
As sacred almost as the marriage oath.
Behind the thrones of the King and the Queen
The most honoured friends of the house were seen,
The doctor and his comely wife,
The same who had brought Hilda back to life
On the evening of the vintage feast,
The glad vintage of a year ago,
Though they miss'd the face of the portly Priest,
Who seldom was missing where goblets flow.
He had sent his best love to the youthful pair,
And special good wishes for Hilda fair ;
Right sorry was he to stop at home,
But to meet Gustavus he scarce could come,
'Twould be certain to bring him into disgrace,
So he hoped they would not take it ill,
For though he dared not show his face
He would pledge them both with a hearty goodwill

In answer to this the Magistrate sent,
For the good man's weakness full well he knew,
In return for the graceful compliment,
A dozen of wine, and some venison too ;
And the Priest made merry on lordly fare,
Though in bodily presence he was not there.

Need we upon the service dwell,
Need we, in every detail, tell
How, to the Pastor's question ask'd,
His head the father proudly bent ;
How Hilda's fortitude was task'd
As her sweetly-falter'd-forth assent
Was re-echoed in a louder tone
And Eric claim'd her for his own ;
On her finger placed the betrothal ring,
The precious gift of his gracious King,
And seal'd it all with a rapturous kiss,
A holy token of future bliss :
Then gently led the maid away
To his King, and to hers, their homage to pay.—
We see them there on the dais kneel,
The German maid and the Swedish youth,
And, with Gustavus, we cannot but feel
What a happy omen it is, in truth,
As he inwardly pray'd that he also might
All the Lutheran peoples thus firmly unite.

While there they kneel before the King,
Through the noble hall again now ring
The clear tones of the Pastor's voice,
Calling all present to witness bear,
Ere he should bless the betrothèd pair,
That Hilda and Eric, of their own free choice,

Had pledged to each other their solemn troth,
To be ratified soon by marriage-oath,
According to custom that holds in the land.

Then—as from his head his skull-cap he raises,
And, with arms outstretch'd, up to Heaven gazes—
The assembled guests all in reverence stand,
And the King and the Queen both rise from the throne,
Leaving Eric and Hilda still kneeling alone.
Not a sound the solemn stillness broke,
As in fervent prayer he began to invoke
The blessing of God on the youthful pair,
Commending them both to His guiding care.
He ceased,—and the echo's "Amen" died away—

But, as Hilda at length from her knees uprose,
Its parting light in a struggling ray

The sunbeam full on the maiden throws,
And seems for a moment a radiance to shed
Of heavenly glory round Hilda's head ;
Then, like the echo, it vanish'd as well,
As below the hill-top the golden orb fell,
No excuse had it now for further delay,
Below the horizon it sped on its way.

Loud rang out the bells on the frosty air,
And brightly the lights from the castle shone :
All, both old and young, from the village were there,
For, though the betrothal banquet was done,
The Christmas feast was now begun.
The tapers were lit on the Christmas-tree,
And the children's eyes were as bright with glee,
For the tables were set in Traubeneck's hall,
And covers enough were laid for all.
At one long table the aged were placed,
To another the children were marshall'd in haste,

And the maiden band, told off to wait,
Had plenty to do to replenish each plate;
But in time at length their labours ceased
When the hungriest child could no longer feast:
And then began the games and mirth
To which Christmastide doth ever give birth.

Hilda and Eric were placed on the throne,
For Gustavus the dignity promptly refused:
"Hilda is queen of the Rhine alone.

My Consort and I may be well excused;
And since Hilda is Queen, Eric must be King,
So, to them, the lots as they're drawn, ye shall bring!"
Each maiden provided herself with an urn

From which every one there a number drew,
And all received from the Queen in their turn,

A gift which their number answer'd to.
Man, woman, and child, all came to the throne,
As their number was call'd, to claim their own!
And it was strange indeed to see

How the gift was suited to each degree,
How all gain'd something they long had desired,
And the children obtain'd at the Christmas tree

Exactly the things that they most required—
A jacket, a cap, a scarf for the throat,
A pair of fur gloves, or an overcoat.

But when the turn of the guests came round
Most ludicrous Hilda's gifts were found.
The King a silver bodkin drew,
And the Queen had to take a wooden shoe,
The Pastor a reel of silken thread,
The doctor a cake of gilt gingerbread.
And thus, in merry laughter and fun,
The Christmas eve into night wore on,

And the mirth and the revels at length were done.
Extinguish'd the torches in Traubeneck's hall,

The blaze from its window dies out on the Rhine,
And one by one disappearing all,

The chamber casements no longer shine.

The village too is wrapt in sleep,

The stars alone their vigils keep,

Twinkling bright in the frosty air,

Mirror'd clear in the wave below ;

In the place of loud peals and the trumpet's blare

Is heard but the rapid river's flow.





BOOK VII.

Wallenstein.

“LONG have I waited for this hour;—at length
My star ascendant in the heavens rises,
And Austria's sets, and his, the Swedish King's,
Pales like a watery moon in deep eclipse.
Ha! I have waited long, but not in vain:
He who hath learn'd to wait hath learn'd all else.
To all in turn doth Fortune's wheel come round,
And who his headstrong nature hath controll'd,
Who to calm reason hath his course subjected,
Must rise triumphant with his rising star.
'Tis only fools fly in the face of Fate,
To whom all times and seasons are propitious,
Who risk all on the moment's passing impulse,
And waste their energies in vain endeavour
To conquer destiny. Thus, when at last
Fortune presents herself, they fail to grasp her;
Worn out and wearied by their useless efforts,
Their nerveless arms have not the power to hold her.
Wise was the counsel, Seni, that thou gavest;
If in nought else to thee were I indebted,
I were thy lifelong debtor even for it!
That I, although the lord of hundred regiments,
Whose will was law, whose word all men obey'd,

Who, peerless in the might and plenitude
 Of power more real than a king's or kaiser's,
 Should yet submit myself to a decree
 Wrung from the Kaiser by the base Bavarian ;
 And of myself lay down the rank and office
 Which, had I chose, they had not wrested from me.
 They thought they had the victory gain'd, they knew
 Nought of the planets or their dispositions.
 To them the stars are but so many lights,
 Or, may be, worlds careering round the sun,
 As long ago Copernicus hath taught,
 And in our own time Galileo shown.
 But that the heavens man's destiny control,
 Nay more, show him, who seeketh earnestly
 Their mystic lore to unravel, what lies hid
 Behind the veil of dim futurity ;—
 Secrets more fateful, fraught with mightier power
 Than all the science of Arabian sages,
 Or the black magic of Chaldean art.
 This they believe not, for their eyes are blinded.
 To us alone, upon whose natal hour
 The stars auspicious smiled, is it vouchsafed
 To read the future in the midnight sky,
 And turn that future to our best account.
 And well for them that from their sight is hid
 What now to thee and me is clearly shown—
 'Twould lead them on entirely to despair !

Seni ! I have this day intelligence
 Received, that now in his extremity
 The Kaiser looks for help again to me—
 To me, whom he degraded, Wallenstein.
 Ay, he shall have it ! but in fuller measure,
 Exceeding far his present expectation.
 The Saxons stand upon his northern frontier,



"I will be Kaiser, or I will be nothing!"

[To face page 259.]

While from the west victorious Gustave presses,
He has no army more, no general now,
For Tilly scarce Bavaria can defend,
And Maximilian will not sacrifice
Himself, his lands, his army for his Kaiser.
All Austria now invitingly lies open,
And Saxony and Sweden may combine
Their troops within the heart of his dominions,
And, with a might o'erwhelming, then besiege
The Kaiser in his own Imperial city.
Well may he call again on Wallenstein,
For no one else can help him in his need !
Did I not once before an army raise
That cost him nothing, and without expense,
Without demanding from the Imperial coffers
A single heller, raised I not his power
Supreme throughout the whole rebellious north,
And drove the King of Denmark fugitive
Off from the mainland to his stormgirt isles ?
Then sought I but Bohemia's crown, content
To be the second in the German Empire ;
But now the second place shall not suffice ;—
I will be Kaiser, or I will be nothing !

Yea, I will help him,—I will raise a force
That shall the Swedish victor overawe,
But not 'gainst Gustave I my might will hurl,
But rather with him will I come to terms,
And will stand idly by, even while he shall
Met out my full revenge on Maximilian !
Then, if we can agree, we will divide
The Holy Roman Empire 'twixt us twain,
And drive forth Ferdinand beyond the seas.
Gustavus' share shall be the Lutheran North,
The Catholic lands, Bohemia, Austria, mine,—

And who shall say, not Italy as well,
Ay, and the East; for I will turn my arms
Against the so-call'd misbelieving Turks.
And thus will I the World with him divide,
If he be willing; but if not, why, then,
Though 't may be difficult, I'll have the whole!
Seni! I have my plans to thee confided,
Look now upon the Austrian Kaiser's star,
And Sweden's too, and tell me what thou readest.
If I judge rightly, and I have some knowledge,
The time is come to operate in earnest!"

While on the midnight heavens now Seni gazes,
And turns on Jupiter his telescope,
And anxious notes the planet's changing phases,
What ground there be for caution, fear, or hope;
While Wallenstein across the table bends,
Marking strange figures on the outspread chart,
And through absorbing columns long extends
The calculations of his abtruse art,
Let us his twisted policy review
Since he in wrath to his estates withdrew.

He had lived the while a quiet country life,
Partly at Prague, partly on his estates,
Careless apparently how went the strife,
Indifferent to the nations' shifting fates,
Renouncing fame and glory, power and place,
His recreation found he in the chase;
Glad, as he said, to new recruit his health
Which suffer'd somewhat from the long campaign;
He meant in future to enjoy his wealth,
In due magnificence his state maintain;
Titles and honours, rank, he would forego,
Himself, content their emptiness to show,

In Wallenstein, the private gentleman,
Men should lose sight of Friedland's powerful Duke,
And his expenditure, once he began,
The Kaiser's scant resources should rebuke.

In splendid buildings he ambition sates,
Castles and gardens rise on his estates ;
His deer and boar parks stretch for miles away,
One could not ride their circuit in a day ;
Whole forests served him but for hunting-grounds,
And towering mountains form'd his manors' bounds ;
While pent-up rivers to his landscapes lent
The charm of water spread in vast extent.
Three hundred steeds within his stables stand,
From the best blood descended in the land ;
Their stalls in sumptuous fittings are complete,
From marble mangers they their fodder eat ;
The bits and spurs in silver gilt are chased,
With gold and silver thread the trappings laced.
His household, journeying in a lengthy train,
Two hundred carriages can scarce contain.
Far more than regal is his haughty state,
His pomp and show Imperial splendours dim ;
Some twenty chamberlains officious wait,
And sixty pages bend the knee to him,
In costly doublets of blue satin drest,
With red silk trimmings, and with fringe of gold ;
And guards of fifty men secure his rest,
And all the approaches to his chamber hold,
With halberts arm'd, and like the pages clad,
The same in colours, though in coarser stuff ;
His brooding soul magnificence made glad—
Of liv'ried lackeys he had ne'er enough ;
Six barons and six knights of noble blood
Behind his chair at dinner waiting stood,

And covers for a hundred guests were laid
Ev'n when a scant repast alone he made.

Such was his state, and such his boundless pride,
In his retirement at his country seats,
No thought had he his light, ev'n there, to hide,
Ev'n there, with Majesty his pomp competes;
But 'twas at Prague he held a glittering court,
The Kaiser to eclipse in splendour sought.
Six massive gateways to his palace lead,
His spacious courtyards yet extension need;
One hundred houses central in the town,
Must yield the room required,—he pulls them down.
The costliest paintings decorate his walls,
And priceless sculptures grace his audience halls.
With golden plate his banquet tables glow,
With rarest vintages his fountains flow.
Though he himself in wine was moderate,
And deem'd those who too well enjoy'd good cheer
Incapable of e'er becoming great,
Profusion to his mind was ever dear;
And he was never better pleased at heart
Than when his tables groan'd with sumptuous fare,
And wine toss'd down by hatfuls did impart
Loud merriment to all assembled there.
On such occasions, for a passing while,
His sullen face, that seldom wore a smile,
Wrinkled with laughter, as the noisy crew,
With feasting heated, quite uproarious grew;
But then it was a dark, sardonic grin,
Which barely hid the scorn that lurk'd within.

All other times a death-like silence reign'd
Within the wing where he in splendour dwelt,—

A silence that men's nerves so greatly strain'd
That, like the Egyptian darkness, it was felt;
Across the streets strong chains of iron he threw,
A line of guards around his palace drew,
Who stopp'd the wagons, warn'd the passers by
With noiseless tread to move on silently,
If from their master's wrath they'd be secure;
For heavy footsteps he could not endure.
The barking of a dog, a cock's shrill crow,
Into a temper would the tyrant throw:
The clinking of the spurs, or weapon's clang,
When scabbard dragging on the pavement rang;
The sentry's challenge, and the brief password,
Might ne'er within his palace gates be heard;
His scheming brain no voices might distract,
But prompt and speechless service he'd exact.
He suffer'd oft and much from gout, and then
Was dreaded even by his serving-men.
Savage and furious as a wounded beast,
He cared not whom he injured in the least;
And, in his camp supreme, he in a breath
The slightest fault would punish there by death.

Designedly he ever play'd his part—
His was the careful actor's studied art;
To make impression on men's minds he sought,
And on their sense of admiration wrought;
To excite their awe and wonder ever strove,
And ruled by fear and dread, but not by love:
Yet was he pleased, when he in others found
The self-same spirit, or some common ground.
It happen'd once, the captain of the watch
Saluted not as he pass'd by his way,
He was a stranger in the camp, and Scotch,
Like many others in the Austrian pay:

'Twas possible the Duke he did not know,
Or, if he knew him, had observed him not ;
But Friedland's wrath against him kindled so,
That he his rank of officer forgot ;
Or, in his rage, for rank he did not care,
But order'd him a flogging then and there.
The Scotchman from his belt a pistol drew,
And firmly set his back against the wall,
Full in the General's face defiance threw,
And dared them to approach him, one and all.
The first who came on him a hand to lay,
Were 't Friedland's self, the penalty should pay.
Upon each other look'd the guards aghast,
Such desperate words to Friedland none had spoke,
They deem'd the Scotchman's certain doom was pass'd,
But Wallenstein again the silence broke :—

“Ah! that is what it pleaseth me to see,
The soldier's honour dearer than his life :
His courage equal to his honour's sense!
And honour, courage, both surpassing far,
And casting to the winds the dread of death.
Life without honour is a paltry thing,
And what a brave man never would desire.
For what is death?—'Tis but the loss of sense,—
Oblivion of the past, when shameful, is
The greatest good a man can e'er attain!
How then, dishonour'd, can he wish to live,
A mark for scorn to vent itself upon?
But, holding honour, he can never die,
He lives all ages in the minds of men.
And though his body moulders in the ground,
His soul, his honour, moulders not with it,
But through the countless ages animates
Like natures to his own to gallant deeds,

And lives again in every kindred spirit !
Thou art a brave man, and in thee I mark
A similarity of soul to mine !
And freely I admit I did thee wrong
In that I sought to put disgrace on thee ;
But I am glad to think 'tis in my power
To make amends for injury I had done :
I will promote thee, for the army needs
Bold leaders who themselves hold death at nought ;
And, since promotion will entail expense,
Two thousand crowns my treasurer shall pay thee !”

Another time it chanced the Kaiser sent
A stranger to the Duke of Friedland's tent,
One who would fain see something of the war.
A warrant with the Imperial seal he bore,
Appointing him to the first troop of horse
As vacancy occurred, in proper course.
Friedland the Imperial warrant slowly read,
And nothing at the time in answer said ;
But to a banquet for the self-same night
The stranger and his colonels did invite ;
And when the meats were done, from man to man,
While still the wine-cup pass'd, the Duke began :

“Colonels, it is the Kaiser's gracious will
That one of you shall die!—Nay, look not thus
Astounded all on me ; 'tis even so,—
The Kaiser wills that one of you shall die.
It matters nothing that he may have gain'd
The rank he holds in the Imperial army
By years of service, and by brilliant acts
Of shining courage in the battle-field ;
Nor length of service, nor heroic deeds

Count at Vienna against noble birth!
The Kaiser values not his faithful soldiers
Who risk their lives, but never see his gold.
They must themselves maintain, as best they may,
From the scant gleanings of War's doubtful harvests—
A meagre pittance at the best of times,
And far below the render'd service' worth,—
And now it seems he even grudges that!
This noble stranger whom ye meet to-night,
And in whose honour I this feast have given,
The Kaiser wills shall take the place of one,
Ay, one of you who here are now assembled.
But note, his Majesty is tender-hearted,
And doth not point out who shall be the victim,
But the first vacant colonelcy demands
For this young gentleman, this carpet soldier!
How, gentlemen! which of you now desires
To yield his life to please his Majesty?
What, no one! Well,—then must ye all draw lots
To say who is to suffer execution!
Or shall I rather now force on a battle
In hope it may create the vacancy?
Sir, I bethink me it were better far
That thou shouldst to the Court at once return,
And place before the Kaiser my dilemma;
And, if thou still must needs command a regiment,
Pray him that he would deign to be explicit,
And name, like David, who shall be the Uriah
Whom in the forefront I must ev'n expose.
Let him in this thy matter do his part
Straightforwardly, and he will find, pray tell him,
Like Joab, I'll not hesitate in mine!"

This incident already plainly show'd
The current's set in which his temper flow'd:

It happen'd in his first and great campaign,
When from the Kaiser he hoped all to gain.
If at the outset, then, of his career,

Erè he had fully gauged his budding power,
The Kaiser's will to thwart he did not fear,

His swelling pride to any height would tower
When once himself he without equal found,
The mightiest general on the German ground,
Whom full a hundred thousand troops obey'd,
Who half a continent by terror swayed.

The greater was the height from which he fell,
The deeper was the hate disguised so well ;
The loftier was the goal to which he'd rise
When once his star ascendant ruled the skies.
Fierce, fell revenge he cherish'd against all
Who had in any way contrived his fall.

Against Bavaria his complaints were loud,
And served to cloak a deep-laid policy ;
But deadlier far, and therefore not avow'd,

Against the Kaiser swell'd his enmity.
The one he could, if interest served, forgive,
The other never, long as he might live.

No sooner had Gustavus once set forth
On his career of conquest in the North,
Than Wallenstein Count Thurn had to him sent,
To hint the treachery his vengeance meant :
And, as the King the Count had well received,
Attain'd his object Wallenstein believed ;
He might, in concert with Gustavus, seek
Revenge on both his foes at once to wreak.
And when the King at Leipzig victory gain'd,
His satisfaction scarcely he contain'd,
And, flinging then away his well-worn mask,
The King's assistance in his traitorous plan

He did not hesitate to plainly ask,
And thus his offers through Sefina ran :—

“ I am prepared, and clearly see my way
The Kaiser in Vienna to besiege,
Or drive him fugitive to Italy,
If fifteen thousand men the King will lend,
To form the nucleus of a mighty force
Which I will raise, as once I did before
At mine own cost, and at the foe's maintain.
The King shall grant me all the lands I win,
And recognise me as Bohemia's King ;
And I will undertake that he shall fill
The Holy Roman Empire's Kaiser-throne.
Until this be accomplished, I will ask,
Beyond the fifteen regiments now required,
No further aid from him, nor yet reward,
Nor recompense for outlay or expense.
This is the aim of my revenge, and it
Is dearer to me than the world beside.
The Kaiser, well I know, sees his mistake,
And gladly would me now again appoint
To the high office which he took away ;
But he has broke his solemn faith with me,
And broken once, 'tis broken—and for ever.
And were his soul sunk deep in lowest hell,
And I alone could by my service save it,
I would not serve him more ;—for vengeance, now,
More than ambition, is my ruling passion ! ”

Gustavus had at first been quite inclined
To turn against the Kaiser Friedland's sword,
And had it been successful, had design'd
Him, like any other general, to reward :

In such a matter he could not be nice,
And Wallenstein would doubtless fix his price.
But this proposal was a different thing,
Repugnant to his majesty as King.
The sword of an adventurer to use

A soldier's code of honour might deem right ;—
A King the royal office would abuse,
Leagued with a rebel, side by side to fight.

And Gustave's sense of majesty was high,—
The King should be the guardian of the State,—
How could the royal title then apply

To one who by rebellion would be great?
And such a man as King to recognise
Would ever lower the title in his eyes. !
He could not act in concert with a knave,
So to Sefna he this answer gave :—

"I cannot from my army spare a force
So large as Wallenstein by thee demands,
And, even if I could, I would not trust
My troops to one who lightly turns his arms
Against his Sovereign, his anointed lord,
And seeks to gratify his vengeance, while
He stretches out his hand to grasp a crown.
Thy master hath misjudged me much to think
I would abet his schemes, or profit by
His treachery, and share with him the spoil.
'Gainst Ferdinand I war not as the Kaiser,
And have no longing for the Imperial throne :
To me my realm of Sweden is sufficient,—
My royal dignity I value higher
Than any other earthly rank or title !
And with Bohemia's crown I've nought to do.
We hold that dynasties should be elective ;
And therefore I could only recognise

As king him whom Bohemia first had chosen ;
For sovereignty is vested in the nation,
One king cannot create another, nor
Refuse the title to his brother king.
I fight for Sweden's Faith and Freedom first,
Then Germany's, so far as she is bound
To Sweden by the same Reformed Religion !
With personal revenge no sympathy
Have I, and though the Austrian Kaiser heaps
Insults and grievous injuries on me,
I cannot be a party to foment
Rebellion 'gainst his lawful sovereignty.
However, then, thy master choose to act
He must not count on any aid from me !”

To Wallenstein this answer Sefin brought,
Which alter'd all his plans, so deeply laid ;
Vengeance with new allies must now be sought,
And Saxony his traitorous schemes might aid.
But with his terms the Elector dared not close,
To his weak mind the risk was far too great ;
In vain the glittering lure Sefina throws,
He coveted, but fear'd to take the bait.
At last, as Wallenstein no help could find,
Nor yet obtain the troops from either source,
His plans he changed, but alter'd not his mind ;
And thus to Seni he disclosed his course :—

“ Since then to me the King will not entrust
The necessary troops, as I desired,
And Saxony, it seems, stands much in awe
Of Ferdinand, and of Gustavus too,
And dares not venture on a doubtful course ;—
Though he would gladly reap the harvest, yet
He will not risk the seed, nor turn a furrow,—

Since thus the matter stands, I must forego
My vengeance for the moment, and must wait.
'Tis pity, grievous pity! Such a chance,
And opportunity so golden, will
Twice in a lifetime scarce present itself.
A rapid march upon Vienna now
The war in one short month would doubtless end;
Would either help me, him I could proclaim—
Or Saxony, or Sweden—German Kaiser,
And I myself would mount Bohemia's throne,
The goal of my whole life's ambition. Well,
We are the playthings of capricious Fate,
And cannot hope to sway our destinies!
And, since the stars themselves proclaim a bar
From common action with the Swedish King,
I must proceed upon my way alone;
And, if the citadel I may not storm,
I yet its ramparts slowly can approach,
By sure though tedious method, sap and mine.
Ay, I will take again the Austrian service,
And raise an army in the Kaiser's name,
And, cent'ring in myself authority,
Will wreak my vengeance in another way!
The Kaiser's General in command of armies,
I'll hold my forces from the war aloof,
In feints and counter-marches spend the time,
And on Bohemia tighten still my grip,
Till even Sweden shall not wrest it from me.
Though he shall conquer Austria, and drive
The proud Bavarian from his capital,
He will thereby but work out my revenge,
And spend his strength on my behalf alone;
For when the Austrian Empire goes to pieces
It will be strange if I am not the gainer!
An army I will raise, but only wield

My power to drive the Saxons from Bohemia,
And Ferdinand will find his Austrian troops
Nothing avail in his extremity!"

Unbearable to Austria some time past
Dependence on Bavaria had grown,
And it was plainly evident at last
That Maximilian could not hold his own,
Much less could he the Austrian lands defend,
Or promised succours to the Kaiser send.
Gustavus now was master of the Rhine,
And Tilly dared no longer take the field;
The northern states their forces too combine,
O'erwhelming might the Lutherans soon would wield:
Defenceless, without troops, was Ferdinand,
Upon him press'd his foes on every hand,
His need was urgent, something must be done,
But who could help? he knew of only one.
The courtiers whom in secret Friedland pays
Venture once more to sound the General's praise.
"Held Wallenstein command," they even say,
"We were not at this fearful pass to-day;
For long ago the Swedish King had fled
Back to his frozen realms beyond the sea,
Rebellion had not rear'd its hydra head,
The Church had stamped out Luther's heresy.
But even now, it is not yet too late,
Your Majesty can Friedland reinstate,
He'd raise an army as he did before,
And quickly turn the fortune of the war!"
Even the Kaiser could not but allow
Their only hope was in the General now.
However much it might offend his pride
From injured Wallenstein for aid to sue

The lesser evil must his course decide,
He had no option, nor aught else could do :
Kaisers and kings must sink their dignity
When driven to the last extremity.

Thus far events had gone that winter's night
And Wallenstein and Seni gazing stand,
Within the turret, on the planets' light,
For now a crisis is again at hand.
The time is come for him to play his part,
The favourable moment he must choose,
And now he needs the aid of all his art,
The opportunity he will not lose.
Long had he swept the heavens, but longer still
Seni retain'd the telescope to try
Each planet's aspect, whether good or ill,
And what foreboded now the midnight sky.
At length he also seem'd quite satisfied,
And left the window for his patron's side ;
Awhile he figured too with rapid stroke
Upon the extended chart, and then he spoke :

"My Lord, I must admit I cannot find
Aught in the heavens but augurs of success :
No combination that I can foresee
Is threatening thee with any dire mischance,
And I, by all my calculations, still
Deduce, by every method, one result.
'Tis true the aspect is not quite so bright,
So glorious, and so dazzling, as it was
Some four or five years past, but this is yet
The rising only of thy planet's day ;
And if its morning dawns auspiciously,
With former noontide's glory well-nigh vying,
It needs no years of schooling in our art,

No lifetime spent in gazing on the heavens,
To truly prophesy meridian splendours.
Both Jupiter, thy star, and Venus, too,
The present time as most auspicious show ;
And Mars, who rules of war the changing fortune,
Cannot effect a hostile combination ;
While Saturn, who doth ever cherish spite,
And bears ill-will to all terrestrial beings,
Directs his withering aspect towards the star
That sways the fortunes of the House of Austria
Which truly could not be in direr straits.
There now remains but Sweden's horoscope
To cast : and there, I must confess, I am
For once uncertain, doubtful, in my readings.
His star, that hitherto hath shone so clear,
Is, as thou sayest, watery and obscure,
As though it were eclipsed by greater glory,
Forecast by thine anew arising sun ;
And yet I cannot see that it is threaten'd,
In any way, by Mars, who still doth favour,
And shines upon it with unvarying splendour,
Which yet may blaze out into greater glory.
I cannot find that it will much affect
Thine own career, but still we shall do well
To keep a careful watch throughout on it.
Doubtless, my lord, 'tis time to operate,
For hardly could the heavens be more benign !”

“ To operate I have begun already,—
Towards my goal the first steps I have taken,
And waited only, ere I would proceed,
Until the stars my onward course should favour!
Some time ago I heard the Kaiser sent
My cousin Max von Wallenstein to sound
Me if I would again take the command,

And, if I would, to offer it to me.
But at that time I hoped Gustavus' aid,
Or Saxony's, to my revenge to gain,
And so I answer'd promptly I would not,—
But framed my answer so that it should serve
A double purpose—first, that it might cloak
My dealings with Gustavus and with Arnheim,
And next, that it should make my way the easier,
If, failing there, I must perforce fall back
Upon mine own resources for my vengeance.
I answer'd that I ne'er would take again
Upon myself an office so unthankful.
I had now learn'd at last to live content
In the retirement which was forced on me,
Nor would my present leisure now exchange
For all the excitements of the Camp or Court.
I had experienced once how changeable,
How unreliable, was princes' favour,
How lightly they, if policy required,
Or need, would sacrifice their faithful servants.
I saw the vanity of rank and honours,
And wanted nothing but to enjoy my wealth
In quiet ease, and end my days in peace;
'Twas possible with glory to be sated!
Such was the answer that I gave, as though
I knew not that he came from Court to sound me,
But opening up my mind as to a friend
Who still took kindly interest in my fortunes;
Yet all along my creatures I instructed
To ever harp at Court upon one string,
The more, when both Gustavus, Arnheim, fail'd me—
That 'twas to his dependence on the League,
And most of all to Friedland's deposition,
The present dire misfortunes all were owing.
The Kaiser should be careful how he lean'd

On Maximilian for his sole support;
He might at any time make his own terms
With Sweden, if the campaign went against him.
If, on the other hand, War's fortune turn'd,
And Victory for his arms decided, then
No limits would be set to his ambition:
In either case would Ferdinand be worsted.
Defeat were ruinous, while victory
Would crown Bavaria's proud ascendancy.
All this were alter'd if an army stood
Equipp'd for service in the field, obedient
To Austrian generals only, and the Kaiser.

"Reiterations, such as these, impression
Upon the Kaiser could not fail to make,
And could not fail his jealousy to rouse
Against the League and Maximilian.
While Gustave's rapid progress after Leipzig,
His culminating conquest of the Rhineland,
Show'd too much time already had been lost;—
That nothing now but prompt and vigorous measures
Could stem his proud career, and save Vienna;
But most of all an army first was needed,
Which no one but myself could raise, or hold,
Once raised, contented to the Imperial standards:
And I already had refused to leave
The calm retirement of a private station,
Professing to have found the happiness
In exile that the camp had fail'd to yield.
And ere the Kaiser could ev'n ask my service
The injury done me he must first repair,
Restore to me the rank that he had taken,
Confess that he had yielded to dictation,
And then must further stoop to beg the favour
That I should deign to take again his honours.

Scarce could a monarch more humiliate
Himself before an injured subject, yet
The Kaiser was advised to gulp his pride—
Necessity like hunger's all-compelling!
And Ferdinand soon wrote with his own hand,
Inviting me to come to Court in person.
In writing I replied not to his letter,
But verbally by messenger declined;
Yet hinted that my known determination,
Never to take command again, nor raise
Imperial armies, I might reconsider.

"I need not tell thee, Seni, that my pride
Forbade me to present myself again
At Court. Once in my life I deign'd to journey
To Regensburg to justify my course—
A course that should at least have never needed
Justification with the Kaiser, since
It raised him to the loftiest pinnacle
Of power and glory, and at no expense—
With what result thou knowest! Then I swore
An oath, more binding, and of direr import,
In that I swore it to my secret soul,
That to my vengeance I would all devote,
My wealth, my life, my genius, my ambition—
Ay, my ambition—and had Sweden help'd me,
Content with vengeance, I had left to him
The foremost place, retaining but the second.
Well, that is past, so be it past, and now
Ambition goes with Vengeance hand in hand,
Each to the other indispensable!
But to return—though I accepted not
The invitation to the Imperial Court,
Yet it was necessary to my plans
Not to be too far distant from Vienna.

For, as at Regensburg, before the world,
He to disgrace me did not hesitate,
So now must all men see that Wallenstein
Is still a factor in the world's affairs;—
That Ferdinand must from his throne descend
And beg me now to aid him in his need.
So I came here to Znaym to seem to meet
The Kaiser half-way, and to hold out hopes
That I might yet on some persuasion yield.
And I will yield, but not a second time
Shall he depose me from the chief command;
Nor will I of myself lay down the office
Until I can exchange it for his sceptre!

“This forward movement had the wish'd result.
The Kaiser's need is such that he is willing
The slightest bending on my part to interpret
As sign of full compliance, that in times
More prosperous than these he had exacted
With ceremonious homage, ere he show'd
The slightest token of Imperial grace,
Or deign'd to grant me tardy recompense.
I will remember it, and in due time
Will write him quittance full for all he owes me!
As soon as ere he heard that I had come
To residence at Znaym, he sent to me
Von Eggenberg, my friend—because he thought
A friend would the more easily persuade—
And Questenberg, who both this day arrived
To lard me over with his protestations.
The Kaiser's loss, in that he lost my service,
Was greater than mine own, they would convince me.
Bavaria and the Princes him compell'd,
And, though he long stood out, yet, in the end,
He weakly yielded, but had ever since

Repented of the injustice he had done.
His high esteem for me remain'd the same,
His trust and favour I retain'd unchanged :
The proof thereof was easy to be seen,
In that he placed himself confidingly,
In his extremity, and Austria's welfare,
Entirely in my hands, and trusted to
My great abilities to save the Empire ;
For I alone past errors could retrieve,
And turn the ebbing fortunes of the war.

“ ‘And thou wilt act,’ von Eggenberg went on,
‘Most generously, and nobly, to forgive
The flagrant wrong that once was put on thee,
And to forget, I own, thy just resentment,
And, casting to the winds the sense of injury,
Stand forth the Champion of the Fatherland,
Who has no thought save for his Country's weal.
So glorious a victory o'er thyself
Will seal and crown thy former services,
And to the latest ages will proclaim
The Duke of Friedland nobly, truly great!’

“ Such arguments from old and valued friends
Had turn'd me from my vengeance had it been
A mushroom growth of yesterday ; but no !
The seed was scatter'd broadcast long before
The day it first took root at Regensburg,
And I have cherish'd now the plant too long,
And spent too many precious hours on it
To pluck it from the garden of my heart,
And substitute a different culture now !
So, coldly, I replied : ‘The Kaiser hath
Indeed dealt most ungenerously with me,
And hath no right to ask me for mine aid !

Yet, as ye say, the Fatherland requires
My service now in this extremity,
My duty to my country, and my love
For my old friends, o'ermaster selfish ease;
And since no one but I can raise a force,
Or gather round our standards daring spirits,
It follows that I must, and I will do it.
And I will sink my pride, and take again
The Kaiser's service, but for three months only,
Within which time I promise to create
An army, and equip it for the field.
But, mark you, I will then lay down my charge,
My duty to my Country being done,
And will retire to well-earn'd rest and ease.
The army I will raise, but understand,
Some other general then must take command.'

"Seni, to thee, to whom I have disclosed
My plans, the object of this stipulation
Will stand apparent, and will scarcely need
That I should offer to explain it thee.
If none but I can raise an army now,
Much less can any man command the troops
That I shall raise, for they will be mine own,
My creatures—soul and body mine! No life,
Nor being, of my will,—word,—independent
An army raised by me shall ever have!
Nor could it hold together for a day
If I but chose it should again collapse
Into the nothingness from which I bade
It spring, obedient to my slightest nod.
The Kaiser then must even lower stoop,
And beg and pray of me to keep command,
Must sink Imperial majesty yet more,
And dignity,—still to his own undoing ;

And I shall then experience the first
Glad foretaste of my hate's maturing vengeance!
My full repast shall follow in due course,—
Not all at once, but in sweet, slow degrees;
For, like the Indian, I will gloat upon
And still prolong the writhings of my victim,
And carefully avoid to strike the vitals
Until I have exhausted every torture!"

Three months have pass'd since, in his castle's tower,
His schemes to Seni Wallenstein confided;
And in three months he fully proved his power
To raise an army as he had decided.
Encamp'd at Znaym, around the castle, lay
Some forty thousand troops in proud array.
From every country had adventurers come
At the first summons of his welcome drum:
Veterans who served throughout his great campaign,
Eager for plunder, greedy still of gain;
Recruits whom, though they had not served before,
The glories dazzled of his Danish war.
His former officers return'd in shoals,
Soldiers of fortune offer'd him their swords—
Most were his creatures, all his art controls:
His wealth the poorer timely aid affords,
The rich he fetters by a different plan,
Humours their vanity and love of praise,
And gives command and rank to any man
Who does at his own cost a regiment raise,
And promises who thus their wealth outlay
Rich grants of conquer'd lands shall twice repay.
Two hundred thousand thalers he expends
From his own private purse, nor hesitates—
To hurry his equipments, gain his ends—
To borrow money on his vast estates;

Pledges his credit, too, in foreign lands,
And levies taxes in the Kaiser's name.
From all the burgher-guilds he next demands
Some contribution, and makes good his claim.
Nothing that can avail he leaves undone,
And thus, when the three months at length were run,
He had his utmost promises fulfill'd,
And, wondering, the world and Austria saw
That Wallenstein created, as he will'd,
Armies completely organised for war;
Yet, when the troops were ready for the field,
The chief command he still refused to wield.
And Ferdinand perceived, when now too late,
He must himself again humiliate,
And beg of Wallenstein to take command
On any terms, whatever it might cost,
For otherwise, 'twas plain to understand
The army would to Austria be lost:
Most of the officers were in his debt,
The rest had staked their wealth upon his word,
And would not hesitate their all to set,
Their whole career, in future, on his sword.
If Wallenstein did not the troops command,
The regiments they had raised they would disband,
For Friedland was the idol of the host,
His creatures he had placed in every post.
No other General dared the Kaiser send,
So Wallenstein had clearly gain'd his end.
To him, the Subject, must the Monarch sue,
And what if he should haply sue in vain?
The foe made progress, and more pressing grew
The Kaiser's need, and greater Friedland's gain.
When Ferdinand at last perceived the snare
It was too late the mischief to repair,
He were the loser only by delay,
For Friedland's terms would rise still day by day.

The inevitable must at length be done,
'Twere sooner over, sooner 'twas begun;
So once again von Eggenberg was sent,
His influence he with Wallenstein must use,
For it was clear the haughty General meant
In semblance only the office to refuse;
Yet all his eloquence could nought avail,
For Wallenstein still told the worn-out tale:

"I never can a reinstatement trust
Which to the Kaiser's inborn sense of justice
I owe not, but to his extremity!
His need is pressing, and my sword alone
Can save him and his lands from the invader:
This service render'd, I shall be forgot—
With safety will ingratitude return!
Why should I risk for him my hard-won fame,
And blast my glorious laurels by defeat?
Which I should do if fortune turn'd against me.
If, on the other hand, I were successful,
What would become of happiness and quiet?
The former envy would too soon arise
Against me, and the Kaiser would again
His General sacrifice to his convenience!
I shall do better far to throw up now,
Of my free will, a post, which soon or late,
Combining spite, and malice, and intrigue,
My enemies will surely hurl me from.
In country life, and in a private station,
Content and happiness at last I've found:
And I have done my duty to my Country,
And more than Ferdinand had right to ask,
In that I have already now so long,
Unwillingly enough, the calm retirement,
And peaceful leisure of my seats forsaken,

To raise for him a force in three short months,
Which no one else had ever got together!"
At last von Eggenberg his patience lost,
Conciliating arts in vain were tried,
By sterner methods must the Duke be forced,
And in a threat'ning tone he thus replied :

"Imperial majesty the Kaiser has
Already, far too much, too deeply, lower'd ;
His condescension has, it seems, but whetted
Thy haughty pride, and but confirm'd thee in
Thine arrogance and headstrong obstinacy,
Thy magnanimity it hath not touch'd !
If this, his last appeal, shall be in vain,
Then look thou to thyself ; I will not say
His Majesty will not for ever cast
Aside the Suitor, and stand forth the Sovereign :
The outraged Monarch then will launch upon
The contumacious Subject all his thunders.
However much and deeply Ferdinand
May have—I cannot say he hath not—wrong'd thee,
As Kaiser he can still command obedience,
Ay, and thy service. Though the Man may err,
The Ruler can by no means fault acknowledge :
And if the Duke of Friedland may have suffer'd
Unjustly, that can be again repair'd ;
For wounds which he himself may have inflicted
His Majesty can doubtless find a salve !
If thou wouldst ask from him security
For rank and honours, any fair demand,
The Kaiser's justice never will deny thee ;
But insolent contempt of Majesty
Cannot by any penance be atoned ;
And disobedience to his just commands
Extinguishes at once all former service,

However brilliant it may once have been.
The Kaiser needs thy duty, and as Kaiser
He doth demand it; and, whate'er the price,
However high the value thou mayst set,
Thyself, upon it, he will ev'n accept it;
But he will have obedience, or the weight
Of his just wrath will crush his rebel servant!"

This alter'd tone did Friedland not surprise—

The Kaiser's present need too well he knew;
And that, as last resource, the weak man flies

To threats, when argument can nothing do:

But he would profit less by more delay,

His policy was clearly to give way

Ere he too much the Kaiser's patience strain'd;

The more so as his point he now had gain'd.

When prayers and threats alternate seek to move

The suitor's desperate strait they only prove;

And when thereto inducements are held out,

His abject helplessness admits no doubt.

No longer Wallenstein his friend withstands,—

Pretends he yields entirely for his sake;

And thus he formulates his stern demands,

Which granted, he the leadership will take.

"If now I yield, my friend, to thy persuasion,

Against my judgment take again command,

I do so only under strict conditions:—

First, I must have supreme and sole control

Of all the Imperial troops within the limits

Of German territory,—let them be

Austrian or Spanish it is still the same;

And I alone shall have the power to punish,

As also to reward. Neither the Kaiser

Nor yet his son, the King of Hungary,

Shall ever in the camp or in the field
Appear, still less attempt to exercise
Authority, or even make appointments,
Without obtaining my express consent;
And I alone shall have the right to give,
To those who may deserve it, grants of lands,
Either in conquer'd districts, or estates
That may from time to time be confiscate.
Next, my reward shall be an Austrian province,
And yet another that my arms shall conquer,
Elsewhere within the Empire, and the Dukedom
Of Mecklenburg when peace is once proclaim'd.
Lastly, the Austrian lands and fortresses,
Even Vienna, shall stand always open,
To serve as rallying-places for my troops,
In case I thus should need to use them; and,
Should ever Ferdinand again desire
Me from my office to remove, he shall
At least give me an early formal notice.
These are the terms on which alone I will
The army I have raised again command!"

Von Eggenberg had fully been prepared
To make concessions on expedience grounded,
Yet, when the haughty Duke's demands he heard,
The courtier was surprised, alarm'd, astounded.
Such insolence could only have one aim—
Designs upon the Realm, upon the Throne;
A subject who such powers could dare to claim
Not long allegiance to the State would own:
But it was useless to expostulate,
The Duke his set terms would not moderate;
And Eggenberg could only then declare
To such vast claims no powers of his extended,
He would the answer to the Kaiser bear,
And take his leave, his mission being ended.

Each clause the Kaiser conn'd without a word,
And by no sign or wrath or fear betray'd,
Alone with his Confessor then conferr'd,
For he was ever by the Jesuits sway'd ;
And Holy Church to him was what the stars
And Seni's science were to Wallenstein,
He, as her champion in these endless wars,
Assuredly could count on aid Divine.
By superstition each, in his degree,
Was blinded—Subject, Sovereign, equally :
Both, in a manner, too, were really great,
Both rose superior still to adverse fate,
Both difficulty, peril, dauntless, faced,
Their cause with heart and soul both men embraced
Implicit trust in destiny stood first,
Unwavering faith in triumph in the end
Supported both when things were at the worst,
Both hesitated not their lives to spend,
And ease to sacrifice, in endless wars ;
But not like Gustave in unselfish cause,
Knowing that he himself must even bleed,
A royal victim to his cherish'd creed.

If Wallenstein contempt of death could show,
And risk his person reckless to the foe,
Until his soldiers, wondering, believed
Their General bore a charm'd, enchanted life,
It was because the Duke as truth received
Seni's assurance that in battle-strife
Scathless the hottest fire he might endure,
From hostile balls and bullets aye secure.
No danger threaten'd Friedland in the field,
He not on battle-plain his life would yield :
Although his fate, he fear'd, was veil'd in doubt,
This much at least could Seni's lore make out,

The stars proclaim'd—their teaching he might trust—
He ne'er had aught to fear from foeman's thrust.

The Devil's truth is ever still a lie
When into future fate Man seeks to pry,
And Wallenstein was by the truth misled :
Though not by foeman's thrust or ball he bled,
Yet was he doom'd within his breast to feel
The assassin's, his own soldier's, murderous steel—
To fall a victim, in the very hour

He thought to sate his fellest vengeance' lust,
And fully gratify his thirst for power,

To fall a victim to a halbert-thrust.
His death was compass'd by his plotting brain,
The measure he would mete out to his lord
Was meted out to him—and not in vain :

Against the traitor turn'd the traitor's sword.
Into the very snare his vengeance set—

Since Passion Reason easily beguiles,
And deeds of ill false confidence beget—

He fell—a ready dupe to Jesuit wiles.

For now, ere his demands were even read,
Lemormain had his nets for Friedland spread :
Within his camp his agents Argus-eyed,
And in his household, every movement spied ;
His creatures all were to the Jesuits known,
And hardly even were his schemes his own.
He was a tool Lemormain meant to use,

And when his work was done to cast aside ;
The power entrusted he should not abuse,

'Twould haste his certain downfall if he tried.
The Jesuits struck in secret, and struck home,
And even kings were not beyond their reach :
To further still the tortuous ends of Rome,
The dogmas of the Holy Church to teach—

For this alone they lived, for this they died,
Nor hesitated to take human life :
The end the bloodiest means aye sanctified,
And hallow'd in their eyes the bowl, the knife.
So Wallenstein rush'd headlong on his fate,
Led by his demon still to underrate,
The while he built his hopes upon the stars,
The Jesuits' influence on Religion's wars ;
And Ferdinand had ruled his realms in peace,
Had bid long years ago the fighting cease,
Had he the promptings of his heart obey'd,
And not been by the Jesuit counsels sway'd.
But he, the Church's Champion of the Truth,
Could ne'er shake off the bondage of his youth,—
Brought up at Ingoldstadt in Jesuit schools,
Through him, the German Kaiser, Priestcraft rules.
Too well the Jesuits' secret power he knew,
Had felt it often, and had smarted too,
But, though the iron pierced into his soul,
He dared not break away from their control ;
And now, at length, was fain to be content
To raise his power and fortunes by their aid,
And, since their meddling he could not resent,
A virtue of necessity he made ;
In his own sanctity himself believed,
And fully his own heart at last deceived.
And thus it was that Wallenstein's demands
At once were placed in his Confessor's hands,
But ere the Jesuit had the paper read
The Kaiser to the Priest, impatient, said :

“ Father, now hast thou Wallenstein's demands !
'Tis evident from these the haughty Duke
Would fain his staff of office soon exchange,—
Would fain exchange it for his Kaiser's sceptre.”

He little knows how wearisome it is
To sway this sceptre and this crown to wear.
If we in whose Imperial veins there flows
The blood of soaring Hapsburg, whose ambition
Knows nought of bounds and barriers, find the task
Of ruling these rebellious realms beyond
Our strength and patience—we, whose House's Empire
Has to new worlds extended, till the sun
Shines ever on our Race's vast possessions,
One aye-enduring round, and only sets
On old-world thrones and European splendours
To rise on Hapsburg's new-world dazzling glories:—
How can this mushroom upstart ev'n presume
To bear this tottering load of Empire, which,
Ere he can bear, he first must wrest from us?
And yet, Lemormain, I have sunk so low
To ask—nay, ask is not the word—to beg—
I, Ferdinand of Hapsburg, German Kaiser—
Have sunk so low, to beg from rebel subject
The aid, which, like a paltry, peddling knave,
He feigns to still withhold to raise his market:
And when at length he deigns to help, I find
'Tis but a snare to further my disgrace;
For if I put my seal to these, and grant
The haughty Duke his arrogant demands,
I delegate my power to him, and make
This Wallenstein the German Realm's Dictator,
And myself forge the sword that he will wield
Ere long in open, undisguised rebellion.
But if I, on the contrary, refuse,
He will the army he hath raised combine
With Sweden's forces, and will march upon
His Kaiser's capital, upon Vienna,
Which at this present moment I could scarce
Against the Swedes defend, then how much less
Against the Swedes and my rebellious subject!

“Ah, Father! it had better been for me
And my down-trodden peoples, if thy counsel
I had ev’n disregarded then when Mansfeld
And Brunswick both were beaten from the field,
And there was none my just authority
To more dispute. Had I but been content
With the full measure of that grand success—
Fuller than it can ever be again—
I had not needed now this Wallenstein,
My country years of suffering had been spared,
And tens of thousands subjects, slaughter’d since,
Would not confront me at the Judgment trump,
When of my stewardship I, too, must render—
The Kaiser, as the peasant—strict account.
Lemormain, will it then avail me, say,
That I should shift responsibility
From me to thee—and thou, durst thou accept it?
Durst thou unflinching stand before the throne
And calmly argue with thy Maker there?
How, when around thee crowd, as witnesses,
The myriad victims of these cruel wars,—
Old men and women butcher’d in cold blood,
Babes with their mothers slaughter’d, virgins ravish’d;
The dumb, yet crying witnesses of lust,
Rapine, and murder, pointing to themselves,
Their gaping wounds, as all convincing proof;—
How, when the archangel’s trump with brazen tones
Calls the black record of thy crimes and mine,
And adds to be to our already damning roll
The list stupendous of this awful guilt,—
Will it then serve thee for excuse, think’st thou,
To answer that the end was good, although
It turn’d not out according to thy wishes?”

The Priest replied not to the question ask’d,—
Such querulous demands his patience task’d,—

And at the time enough, in reading through
The haughty Duke's demands, had he to do ;
But mastering them at length, he raised his head,
And to the Kaiser thus in answer said :

" My son, my statecraft thou hadst never call'd
In question had it only been successful—
It then had been most wise, and right, and good !
Had it not fail'd, I never now had heard
A word from thee of murmuring complaint.
How can the counsel which succeeding were
Righteous and worthy of the highest praise,
Because it miss'd its mark, be now become
A crime, and loaded with the blackest guilt ?
The Holy Church is ever in the right,
Ev'n when the blood of heretics she sheds !
Who would not rather lop a canker'd branch,
And prune the sickly tree, than it uproot ?
Is he not also deem'd a skilful leech
Who amputates the festering limb betimes
To save the body from corruption's taint ?
And if, perchance, in the physician's care
The patient dies, men do not blame the doctor ;
Fell maladies demand prompt remedies,
Prompt remedies are often critical
And sometimes fail, yet oftener still succeed !
And it were wise when fierce contagion rages
To isolate at once the dread disease,
And stamp it out, ev'n by the sufferer's death,
Rather than once allow it to infect
The whole community, and spreading fast
To decimate, perchance, the population.
The Holy Church is like the wise physician,
And must stamp out the Lutheran heresy
At any cost, by any means. Had we

Stopp'd at the period that thou namedst, we
Had left the malady but skin-deep heal'd,
To break out in yet greater virulence.
Nay, not at all feel I compunction that
My counsels thousands to their doom have sped :
I fear no trump of dread, accusing angel,
Nor evidence of crimes through me committed ;
Dauntless before the Judgment-throne I'll stand
And justify my conduct to my Maker !
That God, Who sent out Saul the Amalekites
To utterly destroy, till there remain'd
Nor man nor woman, infant, suckling even,
Nor ox nor camel, sheep nor ass, alive,
Will surely me commend, a faithful servant,
That I have done what He and Holy Church
Thought fit in wisdom to impose on me.
And in that dread and awful day of doom
I shall stand forth elect and glorified
Upon the right hand of the great White Throne,
And enter then into the joys of God,
Appointed ruler over many cities !
For ev'n in Heaven the craft of government,
Through all Eternity the art of ruling,
Is justly rated, held in great account.

"But as regards the arrogant atheist
Who ever shapes his fortunes by the stars,
And by the forecasts of a learned fool,—
This haughty upstart rebel, Wallenstein,—
He is the only tool we have to use
Whose edge is keen enough and temper harden'd
To cut the Church, and thee, and Austria,
A road through Sweden's iron circling barriers ;
So we must use him, and to use him must
Seem to accede to these his base demands.

However insolent and overbearing,
Howe'er outrageous his pretensions be,
He is the only man who now can cope
With the stern warriors of the heretic;
He only has the necessary force,
The needed talent and experience
To inspire with confidence our beaten soldiers.
Gustavus' name is in itself a host;
With Walleinstein's the Church and Austria now
Must conjure too, and when it comes to draw
From the four quarters of the globe recruits,
I question much if Wallenstein's be not
The better bait to lure adventurers.
The forty thousand he hath raised are not
A quarter what he yet may bring together.
But if to us his troops are necessary,
This Friedland too is needful to his troops;
We cannot have the one without the other,—
At least not yet. Grant him the terms he asks,
Yield his demands with free Imperial grace,
And he will doubtless curb the Lutheran victor,
And drive him, vanquish'd, to the Baltic shores.
But if he dare, with pride and victory flush'd,
To drop the mask and openly rebel—
Which it is likely he will dare to do,—
Then may we take his life as justly forfeit,
And I will undertake to find the means:
For Holy Church hath always ready agents
To execute the doom she doth pronounce.
But it may be the Lutherans for once
Will do the Church good service, and prevent
The need of her resorting to the bowl,
Or staining with his blood the assassin's steel;
For he is wont to recklessly expose
Himself in battle, and he so may fall

A victim to his proud contempt of death,
But if he fall not, and do not rebel
When he has served our purpose, and hurl'd back
The heretic Monarch to his icebound realms,—
As promises given under pressing need
Cannot be binding held, or, if they be,
His Holiness can readily annul them,—
Thou canst depose him then from his command,
And in his stead appoint some other man—
As Pappenheim, or Gallas—who would prove
Subservient to the Church, and firmly hold
The Imperial armies true to their allegiance.”

“Well, Father, be it so! the need is sore,
And something must be done, or we shall hear
The Swedish Monarch thundering at our gates,
About our ears the Lutheran shot will fly,
Here in the Kaiserburg, as twelve years since
When Thurn appear'd in force before Vienna,
And threw into the Burg his cannon-balls;
But Thurn and Gustave are two different men,
And Sweden, having push'd so far, will not
Retire, and raise the siege because the town
Does not capitulate at his first summons.
Well, I subscribe these insolent demands,
To Friedland all authority surrender,
And we shall see if he will dare abuse it.”





BOOK VIII.

The Passage of the Lech and Entry into Munich.

IN seething flood the Lech stream flows,
 Swollen by the melting snows,
And on either bank lie in hostile rank
 The Swedes and their long-sought foes.
For while Ferdinand treated with Wallenstein,
Gustavus had broke up his camp on the Rhine;
 With the earliest spring the victorious King
Had order'd his generals their troops to combine,
 Intending to fling
 The whole weight of his might,
As soon as the weather fresh movements allow'd,
Upon the League's Leader, Bavaria proud,
 Compel him a battle decisive to fight;
And then to push on, when the battle was won,
 Until upon his soldiers' sight
Vienna's spires and turrets burst:
The goal he mark'd out from the first,
When once the Hero clearly saw
Thus only could he end the war—
Thus only, after Magdeburg,
 Could he determine Europe's fate,
And only there, within the Burg,
 To Austria lasting peace dictate.

Through Nuernberg he pass'd as he came this way,
But hardly a day did he there delay,
 And his army he sent on before.
Though the time was short the Council decreed
Their city should welcome the Royal Swede,
 The Hero of the war;
That the town should be dress'd in her holiday best,
With arches and banners the streets should be hung,
And the Swedish flag from the town-hall flung,
 Free on the breeze to wave;
The windows at night should be wreath'd in light,
 And the joy-bells pealing rung,
And the workshops closed that all might unite
 To honour the brave, who had come to save
 Their faith from the Papal might;
And torches of pine, with their dazzling shine,
 In long procession winding;
Through the streets should patrol, and illumine the whole
 With a glare that would almost be blinding;
 And the maidens should twine
Laurel wreaths for the King, which the fairest should bring,
 With the victor's bays,
 A tribute to him as he enter'd;
For Beauty's praise and the ladies' gaze,
 From the earliest days,
 Were ever on Valour concentred.

Thus rode the Monarch through the town,
 His graceful Consort by his side;
Glad shouts the long streets thunder'd down,
 Welcomes the very roofs replied,
 The echoes woke,
Applause from countless thousands broke,
And cheers redoubled swell'd again,
 As, hemm'd in by the multitude,

The royal chargers champing stood,
For onward movement was in vain.
The people round Gustavus throng'd,
To touch his robe, to kiss his hand,
And thus the progress was prolong'd :
 In vain command,
The burghers backward Rudolph press'd,
In vain the Magistrate's request,
In vain the Burgomaster tries
To clear the road, and loudly cries :
 "Room for the King !
Make way there—room !" The people crowd
 Yet nearer still, and even fling
 Themselves upon their knees, his course
To bar entirely. Gustave bow'd
 Most graciously, rein'd in his horse,
And to the townsmen cried aloud :
"Good people, well may we be proud
 Of such a welcome, since by force
Captives ye hold us to your love.
My Queen and I, we cannot move,
So closely are we here compress'd,
 Forwards or backwards, either way,
Never have I been so distress'd
 For space to turn, in faith I say,
 On battle-day ;
And since a road I cannot cleave,
I must now beg one, by your leave."

Cheers and shouts rent the air
 As the people, then and there,
Leaving a broad and open track,
 From the middle road fell back,
Content the triumph to prolong
By venting heartfelt joy in song.

As to the town-hall pass'd
At foot's pace the King,
From the windows ladies cast
Glances, vied to fling
Showers of wreaths and chaplets fast,
Proud his path to strew.
Though in early spring
Flowers are scarce and few,
Plentiful they were that day,
With the laurel and the bay,
And the myrtle too.

Chimes of clearest silver tones,
Church bells loudly pealing rang
As they reach'd the Council-hall ;
Entering there, behold two thrones
Raised in glorious state.
Frescoes bright adorn the wall,
Banners from the ceiling hang,
Pendant with the weight
Of interwoven golden thread
And silver glittering overhead.
Before the throne a table 's placed,
With silken cover richly laced,
On it a parchment, roll'd
Within a jewell'd silver box,
Secured with golden clasp and locks,
And lined inside with gold.
It was in truth a precious thing,
But valued far beyond its cost,—
The city's treaty with the King,
Proposed ere yet the sea he cross'd,
And long before stern Leipzig's day
Had proved his arm's resistless might.

Unalter'd now in any way,
It show'd that Nuernberg judg'd aright—
First, of his power
From Austria's thralldom her to save,
Next, of his honesty
In victory's hour,
That he would not himself enslave
The peoples he should free,—
Would not by any sudden stroke
Subject the nations to his yoke,
But like a Hero keep his word,
And sheathe the sword
When he Rome's tyranny had broke.

It was, indeed, a wondrous scene,
And might amazement well excite :
Such King and Queen :—
A conqueror in every fight,
Absolute in boundless might
The King ; the Queen, where Beauty's seen,
And beauties were full many there,
Peerless among the fair,
In figure regal, as in face,
With all the Woman's gentle grace ;—
A royal pair,
Not on account of robes they wear,
Nor ermine's fold,
Nor crowns of gold,
No sceptres in their hands they bear :
A soldier he,
A lady she,
At first glance nothing more
By outward sign the stranger saw—
But let him look again,
Although the Hero's garb is plain,

Yet in his eye and bearing high
Is that that tells of Majesty,
 Of innate nobleness ;
 And none the less
His gentle Consort's graceful mien
 Betrays the Queen,
In every movement clearly seen.

Born to command, yet such his sway
Men cheerfully his word obey,
 He hardly seems to rule ;
But carries out his royal will
With smoothest ease ; his genius still
 Selects each proper tool
To fashion what his master-mind
Perfect in detail first design'd.
A conqueror on the German land,
 The Germans still he charms ;
Lutherans his parts can not withstand,
 Nor Catholics his arms ;
And yet he carries on the war
In a manner all unknown before,
 And treats the foe,
Who from his vengeance vainly flies,
 Who can no more resistance show,
But vanquish'd at his mercy lies,
 Far kindlier than
Germans their fellows hitherto,
When Mansfeld, Brunswick, Friedland, flew,
 With fire and sword
Through districts which they overran,
And German blood like water pour'd,
 Recking nought of foe or friend,
 Seeking each his sordid end,

Terrible alike to all
On whom their famish'd armies fall.

But Gustave, not for royal right,
Nor yet to strengthen Sweden's might,
For Luther's Cause in Freedom's fight
Wages now the war.
While the Monarch every hardship shares,
From his Swedes the peasant scathless fares,
For the Hero for the people cares

Downtrodden sore ;
And, therefore, now in Europe's heart,
A hundred leagues from the Baltic strand,
Through Nuernberg's crowded streets and mart,
Hail'd as the saviour of the land,

And in her grand town-hall
Received in triumph, feted high
With homage due to Majesty,
And seated there upon a throne,
As though the city were his own,

Its burghers subjects all,—
A nobler conqueror is he,
And prouder far his victory,
By winning confidence attain'd,
Since by ambition 'tis unstain'd ;
Since lust of conquest hath no part
Within the Hero's mighty heart ;
But sympathy and love control
The welling fountains of his soul.

The seal to the treaty is set,
And Nuernberg soon is left behind ;
Bavaria is unvanquish'd yet,
And the King no rest may find,

Until the foe,
Who still resistance dares to show,
 In headlong flight
Is scatter'd by his conquering might.
At Donauwerth the Danube's cross'd,
And Tilly still is backward forced,
 But holds fast to the line
Of the river Lech, encamp'd at Rain,
And, all its bridges breaking down,
Commands the stream to Augsburg town.

And thus the King and Tilly lay
On either bank in stern array ;
 The Catholics in their camp secure,
The Lutherans chafing at delay,
 Of victory sure,
If only they could find a way
To deal a blow upon the foe :
But the flooded river's rapid flow
 No hope affords
 Of crossing swords.
For weeks to come the melting snow
Upon the mountains at its source
Will swell the torrent's seething force ;
 Impassable are all the fords,
 And, except the King,
 No one had ever dream'd
A bridge across the stream to fling ;
 And it had seem'd
Sheer madness to attempt to cross
 Full in front of Tilly's force,
His strong position to attack
With a foaming river at their back
 To bar retreat,
And turn repulse into defeat.

And at the Council Gustave call'd
The dauntless Horn himself demurr'd,
The fearful risk even him appall'd
Whose courage dangers only spurr'd,
Constrain'd the veteran to point out
What would result in case of rout :
The soldiers by the river hemm'd,
Whose raging flood could not be stemm'd
Even by the strongest swimmer's skill,
The musket fire would quickly kill ;
The batteries in front would mow
Whole regiments down in ghastly row,
The bravest could but die ;
And panic-stricken, then, the rest
In wild disorder backward press'd,
Could neither stand nor fly ;
And those who escaped the foeman's shot
Would find as desperate a lot—
The choice betwixt a bloody grave,
Like vermin pent within a trap,
Or, what would scarce be better hap,
Inglorious ending to the brave,
A struggling death beneath the wave.

Thus Horn and all the generals speak,
Nor to disguise their fears they seek,
For they had proved,
In many a hard-contested fight,
That they could face even death unmoved ;
And long ago had earn'd the right,
The right that only veterans share,
Whose courage is beyond dispute,
What younger soldiers would not dare,
Of long experience 'tis the fruit,

To express outright their anxious fears,
 Relying on their fame and years ;
 Of cautious prudence unashamed,
 Since cowardice may not be named,
 Even under breath,
 To veterans who can smile at death.
 But Gustave, with a kindling eye,
 Thus to his generals made reply :

 " What ! shall we
 Who cross'd the stormy Baltic sea
 In safety, and the Elbe, the Rhine,
 And other rivers mightier far
 Than this Lech stream,—on aid Divine
 Relying still throughout the war,—
 Who also but the other day
 To cross the Danube found a way ;—
 What, Generals ! shall we now despair ?
 That God, who aye was with us there,
 Will still attend our course.

 What though the foe
 Holds yonder hill in mighty force ?
 What though an angry stream in flood
 Covers his front and both his flanks ?
 What though well-mask'd by underwood
 His troopers line the opposing banks ;
 Is he on that account secure ?
 Are his defences refuge sure
 That he can brave Jehovah's might
 And dare against God Himself to fight ?
 Or, were he confident of right,

 As confident as we,
 Would he then need such broken reed
 As heartless Tilly still to use ?
 Who grandest talents dared abuse,
 Whom Magdeburg's dread curse pursues,

Converting victory
Which waited ever on his arms,
Through conscience-stricken dire alarms,
 Into defeat,
And almost hurling from its seat
By memories of his awful crime,—
Damn'd, doubly damn'd throughout all time,—
 His tottering reason.
With caution we have not to do—
Bavaria, Austria we pursue,
 In season, out of season,
Until the victory is gain'd,
Until our object is attain'd,
Our Lutheran Faith to us secured,
And Europe's liberties assured!

"Though caution we may cast away
Prudence shall still our councils sway.
Fear not that we shall lose the day!
 For I have been
In person to the river's bound,
And carefully have look'd around,
I have mark'd we hold the higher ground.
 'Tis easy seen
Our cannoneers their shot will throw
To more advantage than the foe.
 No matter though
In boiling flood the river runs,
We will fling a trestle-bridge across,
Which, cover'd by a hundred guns,
Will soon transport our storming force.
Once over, who can doubt that we
Shall soon achieve the victory!"

Astonish'd, Maximilian sees
The Swedes erecting batteries,

And Tilly soon becomes aware
That their carpenters a bridge prepare,
And that the Hero-King designs
 To cross in force,
And attack him in his guarded lines
 Deem'd inexpugnable.
A year ago he had thought the foe
Foolhardy, who had dared to throw
Himself against his might at all,
 Hoping a battle to provoke ;
But what of him who meant to fall
 Upon his camp, by a masterstroke
To carry all before him still ?
His camp is rear'd upon a hill
 Whence every shot will tell ;
The winding river's horseshoe bend
Its front and both its flanks defend,
And tangled growth and marshy ground
Its strong entrenchments quite surround,
 Themselves an obstacle
To impede and stay the floundering course
Of those who should the river cross.

A year ago, from every foe
Tilly had deem'd the place secure ;
Ceaseless assault it would undergo,
 Against tenfold odds he might endure,
Of victory in the outcome sure,
But he was now no more the man
Who ever-conquering overran
 The Lutheran land,
Seeming even Fortune to command ;
 His powers were dead,
 His Genius fled,

At Magdeburg appall'd away ;—
Self-confidence he lost
For ever after Leipzig's day,—
And though his courage he regain'd,
It was but a courage forced,
The gloomy courage of despair,
To desperation strain'd,
In which true valour had no share.

All day the Swedish cannon roar'd,
All day an iron storm they pour'd,
Across the swollen flood ;
All day the axe and hammer blows,
As o'er the stream the work arose,
Resounding on the wood,
Swell'd still the mighty volume's sound
Thunder'd from all the guns around.
And 'twas a weird sight,—
The skeleton bridge seen through the smoke,
At intervals throughout the night,
As oft the breeze the canopy broke
That o'er the waters hung ;—
The torches flaring on the wave,
As plank on plank was further flung,
A ghostly, flickering radiance gave,
Through the dense, stifling, sulphurous air,
Flash'd fiercely from the cannon there.
The carpenters upon the planks,
Looming like spectres from the banks,
Huge forms and ill-defined,
Seem'd beings of another world.
Such miraged forms appal the mind
Where mountain crags together hurl'd
Bear witness of a giant strife,
Long ere this age of mortal life,



The carpenters upon the planks,
Looming like spectres from the banks,
Huge forms and ill-defined,
Seem'd beings of another world.

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For, in the loneliest solitudes,
Where never foot of man intrudes,
The spirits of an earlier earth,
To which dark Chaos first gave birth,
 May well have fix'd their home ;—
And at the midnight hour may come
In phantom shapes scarce visible,
Assuming changing forms at will ;
 Or borne on thundercloud,
When through the black vault pealing loud
 The red bolts flaming fall ;—
Or scudding on the rising blast,
 In clouds of spray, when ocean's waste
High in the face of Heaven is cast,
 Loud shrieking in their awful haste,
Storm-spirits to their brethren call
To view the mischief they have done,
And to share in triumphs they have won ;
 Strewing the seas
With dismal wrecks of gallant fleets,
As with the other each competes,
Drowning the crews beneath the waves
In ocean's depths to find their graves ;
Then wildly hurrying to the strand
To vent their fury on the land ;
 Uprooting trees,
And beating smiling harvests down,
In earthquake swallowing up a town ;
From the volcanoes belching out
Earth's entrails in a fiery spout,
Converting into wilderness
 Rich districts with the lava's flood,—
Rejoicing in mankind's distress,
 But chiefly revelling in blood ;
Hovering upon the battlefield
 In clouds of smoke,

Although in presence not reveal'd
Directing each more murderous stroke,
As vultures to the carrion flock,
Upon the carcase screaming light,
So to the clashing battle shock
These fiendlike spirits wing their flight,
Eager to see
The most of human misery ;
Eager to hear
The horrid sounds of human woe,
Of hate and fear,
The piercing shriek on mortal blow ;
Gloating on parting agony,
The death-pangs near,
On the trickling of the life-drop's flow,
The glazing of the starting eye,
On the rending clutch, convulsive grasp,
The struggling breath, the dying gasp,
On all the horrors pain can show
That make it terrible to die.

Through many a veteran's heated brain
These weird tales of the camp-fire pass'd,
As, through the night, their eyes they strain
Upon the bridge now rising fast,
And shuddering think,
As, standing guard upon the brink,
They watch for the signs of coming dawn,
Where may be they
When once again another morn,
Another day, shall have pass'd away ;
And what the outcome of the fight
When eve shall darken into night.
Though Tilly had before them fled,
His former fame was by no means dead,

And well the soldiers knew
It was a daring thing to do,
To attack him on his chosen ground,
By art entrench'd, by river bound,—
Which river, trenches, they must cross
Full in the front of his ambush'd force.
As well might hunter dare,
From his cavern lair, to oust the bear,
Or confront the glare
Of the tiger's eye in the brushwood high,
As for them to venture there
Across the flood where Tilly stood
So savagely at bay :
But they for the King they loved would bleed,
Would follow where he chose to lead,
And doubtless gain the day.
Not theirs the coward's craven fear,
The dread of foeman's steel ;
They would not flinch from death when near,
Yet could they not but feel
This was the hazard of the die—
Then on to death or victory !

The morning broke, the camp awoke,
The clanging weapons rang,
As at the trumpets' stirring notes
The Lutherans from their slumbers sprang :—
Loud beats the rolling drum,
Up to the bridge the stormers come,
And from the cannons' blacken'd throats
The deafening thunder roars,
And thick upon the opposing shores
An iron hail
The deadly grapeshot pours.
They pass the bridge, they do not fail,

They leap upon the bank
 With axe and spade,
And now in duly ordered rank,
 As though upon parade,
Throw out a trench, it is quickly done,
 Erect a palisade,
And, Hurrah! the bridge-head's won!

But where is Tilly all these hours?
 And Maximilian where?
Now is the time to launch their powers
 Upon that handful there,
To concentrate their fire upon
 The rising palisade,
To aim their cannon every one
 Full on the bridge-head laid,
Till not a stick shall stand,
And, ere supports can come to aid,
To annihilate that gallant band.
 But nought is done,—
The thunders of the Swedish shot,
Sustain'd till every piece is hot,
 And till the marksmen tire,
Bavaria's batteries answer not;
 Silent is every gun;
Mayhap until the foe comes nigher
His cannoneers reserve their fire.
For sure, behind that frowning work
 Which the Swedes must shortly storm,
Ten thousand varied deaths must lurk
 In every ghastly forin!
Silent the sullen fortress lies,
It will soon re-echo to the cries
 Of wrath and agony;

And shouts of triumph and despair
Will mingle with the death-shriek there,
And the faint, feeble, heaven-sent prayer
In last extremity,
With piteous moans, heartrending groans,
And curses loud and deep,
Where, trodden in a shapeless heap,
The wounded, helpless, lie,
And all the horrid, awful sounds
With which the battlefield resounds,—
When, in the earthquake of the soul,
Reason loses all control,
Revenge and passion, fury, hate,
Vile passions of our fallen state,
Usurp its place ;
And, lock'd within the devil's embrace,
In mortal combat, hellish strife,
Men, in their thousands, meet their death,
Waste the last sands of precious life,
And spend their failing breath,
In cursing, in their agony,
The God Who doom'd them thus to die,
Predestined from the first Hell's prey,
Created but to fall away.

Poor fools ! when they again awake
To immortality,
The Life Eternal to partake,
They first will learn the human mind
Cannot the Godhead comprehend,
No limits to His Love they will find,
And that his mercy knows no end
Through all Eternity.
Through endless ages rolling on,
As planets that approach the sun

Reflecting its effulgent light,
Attain a radiance still more bright,
So something then of God they will know,
And rays of Him reflected show.
Forgetting there all earthly woe,

They shall discern
What here below

They were too obstinate to learn—
That the Almighty's Sovereign Will
Hath done, and can do nothing ill.

But to the fight.—Still Tilly's might
Is held within the work,

And silence reigns along the line.

What can be the foe's design?

Is it that his forces lurk

In ambush in the underwood,

Till the Swedes have cross'd the flood,

Waiting till the last are near

To attack them in the rear,

And break the bridge behind?

It was plain such fears pass'd through his mind

For the King

Was loath to fling

His troops upon the work in storm;

But cautiously they form

In firm array, and feel their way,

Advancing nigher,

Still cover'd by their cannons' fire.

Yet, as they closer press,

The frowning lines seem tenantless;

For the foe

Does not show,

And to their deafening cannonade

He answers not with a single shot;

And no attack is made
Upon their flank, though gain'd the spot
Where ambush might have hidden ;
Nor yet on their rear does a force appear ;
So the stormers now are bidden,
As the column's head approaches near
To the rampart there,
To prepare ;
And then the word is given,—
With a shout that mounts to heaven
Out of the ranks at once they fall,
Into the ditch, over the wall
They rush, and the work is crown'd:
No shots resound,
Not the death-dealing musket's rattle,
Nor yet the cannon's deeper boom,
No awful sounds of raging battle
That knell the warrior's doom ;
But a ringing cheer
Their fellows hear,
And the stormers soon again appear.

The camp was empty, in the night
Bavaria had taken flight,
Deeming the battle lost,
Though not a single Swede had cross'd
And the bridge-head was not won,
For Tilly, badly wounded, fell,
And Altringer was hit as well,
And nothing could be done,
So deadly was the Swedish fire,
Their batteries being placed the higher.
Forced to look idly on,
His cannon silenced, while the bridge
Rose rapidly, Bavaria knew

Each fertile vale, each wooded ridge,
Safe from the invaders hitherto,
Would now be overrun,
And his capital laid bare.
Yet to stand he did not dare
To await the morrow's dread attack ;
Though his camp was fortified,
And guarded well on every side.
Rather than fight,
In the dead of night,
He to Ingoldstadt fell back :
And the Swedes to their amazement found
The foe had vanish'd from the ground,
Which, had he held,
Might have repell'd,
So strong was it in every part,
Even their conquering Monarch's art.

Gustavus saw with wondering pride
The vast camp's natural strength ;
As critically the place he eyed,
The stretching breastwork's length,
He could no more amazement hide,
But loudly cried :
" Had I been Maximilian,
Ne'er had I given up for lost
So strong a post,
So long as I had troops to man
I had held the wall !
Never, even had a cannon ball
Carried away both beard and chin,
Had I given up the place at all,
To suffer enemies pouring in
To penetrate,

Like a full flooding tide,
O'erleaping barriers, spreading wide,
Into the heart of my estate!
These lines, the key to his own land,
Could almost any force withstand;
And bid defiance to our might,
Had they been only held aright!"

As soon as it was clear
There was no longer aught to fear
From the Duke's retreating force,
And as soon as Gustave knew
It were useless to pursue,
Since the foe the Danube cross,
And at Ingoldstadt in safety lie
Within the walls,
Which by their strength assault defy,
On Augsburg next he falls;
From the Bavarians wrests the place,
And, leaving there a garrison,
His course next hastens to retrace,
And presses on
Without delay, by another way,
Siege now to Ingoldstadt to lay.
Soon after his arrival there,
On the fourteenth day
Since Tilly had his wound received,
The veteran General pass'd away,
The Catholic cause, his dying care,—
For it alone he grieved.
His hurt was mortal,—near his end,—
But few short hours had he to spend;—
Yet, face to face with death,
With utterance scant, and failing breath,

He begg'd Bavaria to attend
 To his last, his best advice,
How now Gustavus to withstand :
The Danube's stream he must command,
 At any sacrifice
Must, ere had pass'd the favouring hour,
The city Regensburg o'erpower ;
 And there await,
Whatever might be Munich's fate,
 Although the King
Would overrun his defenceless State,
 The succours Wallenstein would bring.
There only could he be secure ;
Its situation would assure
 Communications still ;
Betwixt Friedland's rising camp at Znaym
And Regensburg at any time,
 His scouts could pass at will.
Once master of the place, the Swede
Might vainly at its ramparts bleed,
 In vain the town blockade,
For Friedland's troops would haste to aid ;
 And, once combined,
The Swedish King his match would find.

Thus the great Catholic General died,—
 Humbled his pride,
Within a close beleaguer'd town,
In which he was compell'd to hide
 From fickle Fortune's frown,
He whom for such a lengthen'd while
She favour'd ever with her smile ;—
His spirit broken by defeat,
His conqueror's triumph all complete,
His failing cause at lowest ebb ;

And yet in death his only thought
How to burst through the tightening web,
How best the enemy might be fought,
His army into safety brought.
In his eye's dying gleam
Once more his genius reign'd supreme !

Had he but fought for a better cause,
His name had through the ages shone
The ablest general of these wars,—
Who ever still the victory won,
Until Gustavus rose.—
The scourge and terror of his foes,
The ruthless cause of the nations' woes,
Which, though they mounted high to Heaven,
Had they been all he had been forgiven.
The Church that did his service claim,
Which by his sword
The peoples' blood outpour'd,
Must bear the blame, the lasting shame,
Till time shall be no more,
And then must answer to its Lord
For its part in this cruel war.
Count Tilly's dazzling victories
Had blotted out his cruelties
From the world's eyes,
Which, widely open to success,
Are ever blinded by distress,—
But there are crimes which even condemn
The man who has committed them,
And, however great,
However glorious his fame,
Howe'er exalted be his name,
His guilt perpetuate ;

And after Magdeburg's dread day
From reeking Tilly pass'd away,
 Not only victory,
But with it, too, the world's applause,
Till even Holy Church saw cause
 Her champion to deny,
And heap upon his guilty head
The blood she herself had really shed.

 For, of the two,
The Romish Church had more to do
 With the carnage of that day;
 Be hers the guilt
Of all the innocent blood there spilt,
 Who encouraged him to slay,
 Who heartless taught,
Were but her own advantage sought,
Whatever means to bear were brought
 The end would justify.
No matter who their doom might share,
He must not rebel heretics spare.

 What though the innocent die,
Let Magdeburg example set,
A wholesome terror to beget,
 A warning there to show
How Rome wreaks vengeance on the foe.
 This, plainly understood,
Would be the means of saving life,
And would put an end to further strife,
 And stay the flow of blood.
The foul rebellion nearly broke
 By past reverses in the war,
Stamp'd out by one relentless stroke,—
 Its overthrow complete
 With Magdeburg's defeat,—
Would rear its head no more!

Tilly had been in youth
A Jesuit, forsooth,
But soon the Order he forsook,
And service under Alva took,
Because he own'd as truth
That he would higher fame attain,
His Faith would more by his genius gain,
In the fierce trade of war,
Than by the subtilties of his brain,—
Though versed in churchman's lore:
That he would prove an apter tool,
Nurtured in Alva's bloody school,
With an iron hand
To carry out Rome's dread command,
To extend her cruel rule;
And would in the field find wider scope,
And gain far more renown,
Than ever he could dare to hope
Clad in the chasuble and cope,
Or in the schoolman's gown.
But, ere on him our judgment's pass'd,
Upon his bloody creed
Our burning censure must be cast;
That such a man could need
His very virtues prostitute,
To sink the genius to the brute.
Virtues he had we may admire,
And qualities which all desire;
Oh! had he not been Jesuit bred,
In nobler cause his blood had shed,
He had been high renown'd,
To victory his troops he had led,
Had himself with glory crown'd,
And won the warrior's deathless fame,
But second to Gustave his name.

He fought for neither power nor pelf,
All selfish motives could disclaim,
Refusing honours for himself,
To Bigotry his sword he gave—
While Gustave battled for the Right,
To advance the glorious Gospel-light.

Sad, sad that he so brave,
So talented, for Priestcraft's night,
For Romish Error's deadly blight,
Should aye fanatically fight,

To be cursed in his grave,
And have all ages crying shame
On Magdeburg's destroyer's name.

While Tilly lies within the town
Dying slowly of his wound,
A swifter fate well-nigh befalls
The King outside the walls,
For a shot of four-and-twenty pound,
Brought both the horse and rider down.

And loud the outcry rose—
A cry of anguish from the Swedes,
"The King is hit, he bleeds!"—
A shout exultant from their foes,
Who concentrated all their shot,
From every gun, upon the spot.

But the ball had spent its force
Upon Gustavus' favourite horse,
And the King arose unharm'd,
Another charger soon bestrode,
Back to his people safely rode,

And them rejoicing show'd
They had no cause to be alarm'd
For their loved Monarch's sake;
By trusty followers begirt,

Their dangers he would still partake :
Though smear'd with dirt he was unhurt,
He had ventured too near, there was nothing to fear,
 They might answer the foe
 Who had aimed the blow
With a ringing Swedish cheer.

Bavaria, Ingoldstadt forsaking
 To its stout garrison,
Had, Tilly's dying counsel taking,
 Of Regensburg possession won,
 Intending there to stay,
And thus the victor's course delay,
 Until with Wallenstein
His beaten troops he could combine.
 Holding the Danube's flood,
Under the fortress' guns he stood
 Strategically secure ;
For, were he press'd, at any time
Upon the force encamp'd at Znaym
 A safe retreat was sure.
 And there was no doubt,
 Even if left alone,
That Regensburg could long hold out,
Held only by a garrison.
While should the King the place invest,
 Then Austria time would gain ;
For what she needed most was rest
 To recover from the strain,
Her armies' overthrow complete,
Of never-varying defeat.
So rapid had been Gustave's course
 From victory to victory,
So swift his progress from the Rhine,
That now the Kaiser's sole resource

In this extremity,
And only hope was Wallenstein.

This stroke of Maximilian's
Altered at once Gustavus' plans,
And changed the whole current of the war ;

No longer more,
Since Regensburg still barr'd the way,
Avail'd at Ingoldstadt delay ;
For, when the latter town were won,
The former's siege must be begun :

Far too much time it would waste,—
Gustavus raised the siege in haste.
No longer now the valley show'd,
Through which the turbid Danube flow'd,
To Austria the easiest road ;—

Bavaria held the flood,
And, ere he could the barrier force,
The stream would run with blood ;
And Regensburg, at awful loss,
From his firm grip he first must wrest,
Ere into Austria he press'd ;—
For it was his maxim ne'er to leave

A fortress in his rear,
Security he must receive
That his road back was clear.

Though altered now the campaign's plan

Gustavus did not hesitate ;
Bavaria's states he overran,

Resolv'd to penetrate
To Munich first ; for thus would he
Compel the Duke to risk a fight,
Or else his capital to see
Surrender'd to his conquering might.

For of this the King was sure,
If anything at all could lure
 The foe to show
His face in the open field,
He would come out and strike a blow
 Rather than Munich yield.
But still the Duke the counsel took
 That Tilly, dying, gave,
And Regensburg he ne'er forsook
 Not even his capital to save,
Though ill could his chafing spirit brook,
His territories overrun,
 His palace won,
To see his banners flaunting brave,
Reflected in the Danube's wave,
As though for joust or holiday
Assembled were a pageant gay,
And all this idle, proud array,
 He had together brought
 To furnish sport
For the burghers and their dames,
 To while the time away,
Which hung too heavy on their hands,
 With military games,
And the music of his martial bands,
 And festive salvo's roar,
And all the city understands
 By the mimicry of war.
Well might it gall the Duke's proud heart
To idly act this ignoble part.

Meantime Gustavus onward press'd,
Town after town surrendering fell
 Like all the rest—
Too numerous their names to tell.

But while no place his might withstands,
 Woe to the straggling Swede
Who falls into the peasants' hands,
 Hopeless his fate indeed,—
For him no mercy, not the least,
 No pity may the bigots feel.
Against such weakness, taught the priest,
 Good Catholics must their bosoms steel.
Gustavus was the Antichrist,
 His troops the Devil's brood ;—
A Lutheran's head was duly priced.
 In vain the straggler sued,
For compassion was to them unknown ;
 Not only fame,
But indulgence could his butchers claim ;
For massacre would sins atone.
And every new-inflicted pang
 That cruelty could devise,
Each agonising shriek that rang
 Heartrending to the skies,
Some other devil's deed effaced,
 And absolution won ;
And in confession only placed,
 The penance full was done.

Too plain a witness bore
The sight of Swedish corpses found,
Lying dismember'd on the ground,
 And streaming yet with gore ;
While others to a sapling bound,
Charr'd by the embers scatter'd round,
 The soldiers shuddering saw,
 And vowed in awful ire,
As into a blaze they fann'd the fire,

They would avènge their comrade's fate—
Would a hundredfold retaliate!

That very flame

The country wide should devastate,—
Kept in their torches still the same,

Ever alight,—

And flash its rays in reddening blaze,
Like the meteor's flight in the darkest night,

Upon the guilty peasant's gaze,

Burning in vengeance down

Farmstead and hamlet, village, town,
The very capital as well,

The whole to crown.

On Munich's fate the world should dwell!

Thus vow'd the soldiers, but the King

Would hear of no such thing.

All who redhanded might be caught

Should be at once to judgment brought,

And, without loss of time,

On them should punishment be wrought

Commensurate with their crime.

But otherwise he would treat the land

As gently as he could;

Against the League and Ferdinand

In arms on Catholic ground they stood,

Most carefully they must withstand

Temptation to shed needless blood,

To show the foe

The Lutherans vengeance could forego.

The Catholics the cost

Of the war that they had forced,

Must even pay, as best they may,

When levied in a regular way;—

Even if their towns capitulate,
Must purchase at a heavy rate
Immunity from storm and sack ;
 And must pay back,
 Ere peace is made,
The outlay Sweden has incurr'd
 In coming to her brethren's aid ;
But nothing more must there be heard
 Of wasting lands,
Of hunting down with armed bands
A people that scarce understands,
 By Priestcraft still misled,
And innocent blood must not be shed.
Thus spoke the noble-hearted King,
But scarcely stay'd the murmuring ;
 Although they loved him well,
 The soldiers' wrath,
In passionate fury had burst forth,
 Roused by the awful sight
Of mangled corpses—those which fell
 Beneath the brutal peasants' might.
Their King they would not disobey,
 Yet the priest had rued the day
Who such inhuman doctrine taught ;
 And I would not say,
Had he but been by the troopers caught,
And into camp a prisoner brought,
The soldiers had not, in their ire,
Even roasted him before the fire
 By which their comrades died :
Vainly had he for mercy cried,
They had gloated o'er his agonies,
His death-shrieks mounting to the skies.
 With them blood called for blood ;—
The soldiers hardly understood,

We must not e'er suppose they could,
Their Monarch's nobler mood.

Gustavus now the city near'd,
And Munich's burghers greatly fear'd
The Lutheran Monarch's wrath.
Of defenders was the town bereft,
Its leading citizens had left
The city to its fate;
Had hurried forth,
Leaving their heavier goods behind,
Refuge in country seats to find.
They thought the King most surely would,
Whether or not the town withstood,
Retaliate;

For Magdeburg's enkindling brand
Might well a precedent form,
And the Lutherans now had the upper hand,
The place to sack and storm:
Nor could they even deny
The cruel course of the Catholic war,
To which Lutheran lands sad witness bore,
The deed would justify.
For Munich was the citadel

Of him who wielded Tilly's sword,
Who, as Leader of the League as well,
The Lutherans' blood had long outpoured,
Remorseless Maximilian,—

Whom Tilly own'd as sovereign lord,
By whose command he overran
The Rhineland with his savage horde,
Whose baneful influence on the war
Had been even more:

Till Wallenstein arose,
Whose lawless bands

Ravaged alike both friends and foes,
More terrible than Ferdinand's.
Next to Vienna most to fear
Had Munich from Gustavus' might;
No wonder then as he drew near
Her wealthy burghers took to flight,
And the rest no better counsel knew,
Now to avert their fate,
Than humbly for their lives to sue,
At once capitulate,
And to the King make abject prayer
He would the yielded city spare.

In vain
The German Lutherans in his train
The conquering King advise
To give the city as a prize
For his soldiers now to sack,
And thus pay back,
Where of right the payment most belongs,
Where the Duke it most would rue,
The vengeance so long overdue
For Magdeburg's sad wrongs.
For let the blood in Magdeburg shed
Through Munich's streets in torrents flow—
Let Munich even be wrapt in flames
Till the sky above is red
With the awful furnace glow.
Let Munich's maids and Munich's dames
Weep those they ne'er shall see again,
Their lovers, husbands slain,—
And even then she nought will know
Of Magdeburg's far bitterer woe;
And even then have cause to bless,
In her extreme of wretchedness,

To even bless the Lord,
To whom stern vengeance still belongs,
That Lutheran, and not Catholic sword,
On her avenges Magdeburg's wrongs.

Thus argued they, but still in vain,
The King's consent they could not gain:—

The Hero would not stain,
By an act of vengeful cruelty,
The triumph of his victory.
The past he could no more restore,
And he would not it resent;
If only he might end the war
He would be well content;
The burghers yielded him the town,
How then could he burn Munich down?

Nay, he would rather show
Example, to his bitterest foe,
Of clemency,—
Far rather would conciliate
All who his power no more dispute,
In this his hour of victory,
Than sow anew fresh seeds of hate
To ripen deadlier fruit.
Councils of blood he would not hear,
And Munich had no sack to fear.

The King in triumph rode
Through the city's open'd gates,
The Elector Frederick at his side,
Pensive, his prancing steed bestrode,
For changeful are the fates,
And variable as ocean's tide.
Two years ago he little thought,
A fugitive at a foreign court.

So strange a change
Could in his fortunes ere be wrought;—
That he through Munich's streets would range
 A conqueror, at will;
 That Maximilian,
Who the Palatinate overran,
 His deadliest enemy still,
Against whose arms he had vainly striven,
Would from his land in turn be driven,
And forced at Regensburg to wait
 Until relenting fate,
Or, rather, haughty Friedland, chose
To succour him against his foes.
Well might it all to Frederick seem
 But the shadow of prosperity,
The unreality of a dream
 That mocks us with a lie—
Short lived was Fortune's favouring gleam!

Behind the King, in proud array,
 The conquering army came;
His veteran generals led the way,—
 Full many a name
Known then and afterwards to fame,
 In War's rough school grown gray.
On Munich's stony street
Fell next the tramp of measured feet;
 With beating drum,
And colours flying to the breeze
Blazon'd with Sweden's victories,
 The northern warriors come:
The yellow regiment, and the blue,
Composed of veterans tried and true,
 Both regiments of the guard:
On them Gustavus aye relied

To turn the doubtful battle-tide ;
Veterans who knew no other pride,
 And look'd for no reward,—
 No other than
Ever to form the army's van,
 To march before,
And lead the way on the pageant day,
 As they were wont to do in war.
A youthful troop of German horse
 Next on the scene appears,
In very truth a gallant force,
 All Lutheran volunteers.
Arm'd with the deadly Polish lance,
They scour before the King's advance,
 The army's eyes and ears.
It is theirs the onward road to show,
To glean intelligence of the foe
 Before the battle-day,
Relying on their coursers' speed
To bear them scathless in their need ;
The victory won, to follow on
 By every way as best they may
 To cut off the retreat,
To break the bridges, seize the fords,
 And when all this is done
To hotly press the flying hordes,
 And make the rout complete.

And, following them, the rank and file,
 As far as eye could see,
Column on column, many a mile,
 Press'd onward steadily :
And as they pass, each northern race,
By varying arms and altering face,
 The sullen burghers trace,—

Descendants of the Goths are there,
The conquerors of ancient Rome;
Against Rome's fell might the sons prepare
To drive their weapons home.
Them troops succeed
Who, truly Swede,
Are known by their golden hair,
And by complexion fair,
Which southern suns have somewhat tann'd,—
Warriors of iron heart and hand,
Although their light-blue eyes
Beam kindly as the summer skies;
A noble band,
They much impress the silent crowd,
Well might their King of them be proud.
Norland, and Lapland, Finland sent
Each her quota to the armament;
Tall Pomeranians, too, were there,
The Elbe and the Weser send their share;
And Dutchmen come from the Lower Rhine,—
And higher up, where golden wine
Is grown on its rocky banks,
Germans neglect to tend the vine
To swell Gustavus' ranks.
Soldiers from Mansfeld's, Brunswick's hordes,—
Adventurers who sell their swords
To him who most can pay,—
Irish and Scotch, Italians too,
Spaniards, and Englishmen a few,
A motley and ill-favour'd crew,
Next crowd the narrow way,
Their advent long would Munich rue,
Dared only they
The Swedish Monarch disobey,
His strict-kept discipline break through,
And pillage but a day.

"Hark! to that sullen, rumbling sound,
An earthquake shakes the trembling ground,
The lofty buildings rock!"
"No, it is not the earthquake's shock,
It is the King's artillery,
The same that gain'd the victory
When we were at the Lech undone.
Ha! neighbour, what sayest thou?
Ay, ay, from one,
Perchance indeed, from that very gun
That's passing now,
Was fired the fatal shot
From which soon after Tilly died;
Altringer falling by his side.
Our soldiers say, and well they may,
It was an awful day,
And never more to be forgot!"

For hours roll'd by the incessant stream,
To the sight the townsmen throng:
Some score of oxen in each team
Drag each huge piece along;
The long street viewing up and down
Cannon, wagons, oxen, fill the town.
Beyond the gates the first had pass'd,
Traversed the city through,
So long was the line,—ere yet the last
Within the ramparts drew;
But at length the dread artillery,
And attendant wagons rumbled by,
And, as now the rear
Was drawing near,
Scarce could the people restrain a cheer,
As their sullen mood gave way:

For feelings too long pent
Must at last find vent,
And since it was clear there was nothing to fear,
They determined to make it a holiday.
And as the Finland cuirassiers,—
Proudly the chargers trode,—
And the cavalry swept by,
Attended by their muskeeters
Filling again the road,—
They peer'd through the casements shy,
And, as they bolder grew,
The city dames and their daughters fair
Assembled there
The pageant gay to view.

And thus was Munich won,
Bloodless was Gustave's victory!
The entry ended as begun,
Unstain'd by lust or cruelty.
A year ago,
Almost to the very day,
This was the seventh,—the tenth of May
Had witness'd Magdeburg's overthrow;
Thus, in the year, his turn had come,
Had Gustave chose,
To avenge himself upon his foes,
And to bring to Maximilian home
In his own citadel,
Had he but issued the commands
To yield it to his vengeful bands,
The awful fate that then befel
The Lutheran town by Tilly's hands.
But now, instead
Of streams of blood in torrents shed,

Of sky above and earth below
Commingling in a fiery glow,
The captured city sinks to rest
 In all tranquillity.
Their victors Munich's burghers blest,
As they their wonted pillows prest
 In full security.
From the calm heavens the stars look down
Upon a slumbering, peaceful town,





BOOK IX.

The Siege of Nuernberg.

THE King stands in the arsenal yard
In the Duke's surrender'd citadel.
At every gate his Swedes hold guard ;
The approaches all in echoes tell
The presence of the sentinel,
Keeping his watch and ward.
On every side the courtyard round
Gun-carriages the prospect bound,
But the cannon nowhere can be found.
Nor does the pavement show a trace
Of soil removed, or of broken ground ;
Each ponderous stone is in its place,
And yields, when struck, a deaden'd sound,
Which proves no hollow lurks below.
And yet one thing is clear—
The guns can not be far away ;
The workmen, if they chose to say,
For it must be somewhere near,
Their hiding-place might even show ;
But, one and all, they nothing know,
Or, if they do, will not betray
The secret to their country's foe.



Some thirty thousand pieces told
Came from the bombard's round.

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Yet, what avail the eleven true
If but the twelfth a Judas be ?
What failing cause ye ever knew
Upheld even in extremity
By noble hearts, a gallant few,
But must in camp a traitor rue ;
Iscariot will be present, too,
As in Gethsemane.
It is ever so ; and here was one
Base spirit with as black a heart,
Who, ere the search was scarce begun,
A soldier slyly call'd apart :
" Beneath the stones of yonder stair,
It would be as well if ye try there ;
And should ye hidden treasure find,
Then, as is only just and fair,
Of my claim to the informer's share,
Thy Monarch, friend, thou must remind."

The steps were promptly forced apart,
And there, most cunningly conceal'd,
That, had the place not been reveal'd,
So subtle was the craftsman's art,
They never had been found,
Some seven score guns in order lay,
Row upon row, all stack'd away,
Buried beneath the ground ;
Cannon of heaviest calibre,
Both bronze and iron pieces there,
Throwing shot of fifty pound.
And in the largest of them all,
In the place of iron cannon-ball,
In rolls of canvas wound,
Were hidden bags of minted gold ;
Some thirty thousand pieces told
Came from the bombard's round.

But when the informer urged his claim
Thinking to win a large reward
From the treasure in the cannon stored,
The canvas he was given, the same
In which the gold was bound.

To the palace next Gustavus went,
Which, like the arsenal, was bare ;
His valuables the Duke had sent
To Werfen, what was rich or rare :
Yet grandeur in the buildings there,
Magnificence in ornament,
And architecture fair,
The palace, though dismantled, show'd,
As through its portals Gustave rode,
As through the spacious rooms he trode,
And mark'd the frescoes on the walls,
The statues in the corridors,
The sumptuous fittings of its halls,
The richly-tinted light which pours
From the stain'd window streaming,—
And through the audience-chambers pass'd,
With numerous mirrors gleaming,—
His eye on all this splendour cast,
The King some time in silence gazed.
At length he ask'd the guide amazed :
“And what may be the builder's name,—
An architect well known to fame ?”
“His name,” replied the Castellan,
“His name is Maximilian.
Our own Grand Duke may well lay claim
To glorious and high-honour'd name !”
“An architect I much require,—
Just such an one !” return'd the King,
“The Duke would answer my desire,

This palace is the very thing,—
Him would I could to Stockholm bring!"
It was jestingly the Monarch spoke,
The Castellan kept up the joke:
"And God forbid our architect
Should thus in his career be check'd—
His fame on rocky Stockholm wreck'd."
"The ship is safe," the King replies,
"That anchor'd in the harbour lies,
 Afraid to put to sea.
No doubt the Grand Duke too is wise,
To port in Regensburg he flies,
And me the battle still denies,
 Where risk must ever be.
Thy Sovereign, friend, will not be caught,
To Sweden ne'er in triumph brought:
No field betwixt us will be fought;
 He will not risk another rout!"
And even so it came about—
It happen'd just as Gustave thought.
Bavaria's Duke would not come out,
Although the Swedes, he could not doubt,
With his strong posts much havoc wrought;
Although his subjects aid besought.
While of his territories aught
Remain'd, he ventured nought
 In the open field against the King,
 To his garrisons dared no succours bring,—
Feeling with danger 'twould be fraught.

Friedland meantime had tried to make
A separate peace with Saxony;
Hoping thereby revenge to take
On Gustave and on Ferdinand,
O'er both to gain the upper hand,

By inducing him now to forsake
The cause of his ally :
But, finding he could not succeed,—
The alliance was too lately made,
The Elector could not with such speed
His compact with the Royal Swede,
Who succour'd him in direst need,
Break yet with decency,—
He burst from Znaym in sudden raid,
His army organised complete,
Surprised the Saxon garrison
Before they could from Prague retreat ;
And thus again the city won,
Which, as his own, his royal seat,
He long had learn'd to look upon,
Ere yet his vengeance, soaring higher,
Dared to the Kaiser throne aspire.

Swiftly the whole Bohemian land
The Saxon troops evacuate.
The Elector dares not make a stand,
For Friedland's fame is far too great
For him to tempt uncertain fate.
And quicker far than he had won
Bohemia, it again is lost,
For Friedland's captains overrun
The province, taking post by post,
While he his preparations made
The Saxon country to invade.
For it was Friedland's vengeful plan
In inactivity to wait,
Till crush'd was Maximilian,
Towards whom he bore the direst hate,
Till Gustave at Vienna lay,
Then—then would dawn his vengeance-day—

And then would the anxious peoples see
Who lord of all the world should be!

Bavaria's Duke had sent in vain,
As soon as e'er the Lech was pass'd,
His messengers again and again,
Each on the other following fast,
To Wallenstein for aid.

From Regensburg once more he sent,
But still excuse was made,—

Friedland his forces must augment,
He was unprepared to take the field,
His duty Austria first to shield.
Bavaria thus was overrun,

Town after town Gustavus won,

Even after Munich fell;

Yet Friedland, when at his own time
He moved his camp at last from Znâym,
As we have seen, still northward press'd,
Although the Kaiser him address'd,

Entreated him as well,

To aid his friend who long has striven,
But now to Regensburg is driven.

And Ferdinand already rues

The authority to Friedland given,

For the Subject dares refuse;

And the Sovereign can no more command,

For the warrant's sign'd by his own hand,

And he has now no more

The power of ordering the war.

"How better could,"—Friedland replies,

As he the Kaiser too denies,

"How better could Gustavus waste

His troops than on the fortress' walls?

Once Saxony from Bohemia chased,
On Sweden then my army falls;
But ere I march, my flank and rear
Must have from Arnheim nought to fear.
I hope to force on Saxony peace,
And thus my forces to increase,
And then, with far superior might,
In one decisive, desperate fight,
The Swedish King to overthrow,
And Austria rid of every foe."

But Gustave ever presses on,
Bavaria now is almost won;
To Austria next he turns his course—
Nought can resist his onset's force,

No fortress bar his way.

The Kaiser, fearing for his lands,
Intreats and threatens, storms, commands
With Maximilian to combine.
Excuse no longer Wallenstein

Can make for more delay;

Though he had hoped the Swedish King
His might would on the capital fling,
Drive Ferdinand from Vienna forth
While yet he linger'd in the north,

He dared not disobey;

His army was not ripe, he fear'd,
'Twere best to wait ere yet he rear'd,
Ere yet his standard he unfurl'd,
Stood forth a rebel to the world,

To wait a future day.

His time would come, and he would show
Himself a most relentless foe;
His vengeance he would ne'er forget,
To the Kaiser and the Duke his debt

To the last mite would pay!

So he fix'd Eger as the place
Where they a junction should effect ;
And Maximilian there combines
(Betraying not the slightest trace
Of humiliation by his face,
His bearing proud, with easy grace)
His forces now with Wallenstein's :
The man whose fortunes once he had wreck'd
And hoped to wreck again,
Who, he well knew, occasion sought
To wreak dire vengeance on his head.
Yet, as his help must even be bought,
Since he the Imperial armies led,
He smother'd his disdain ;
To Friedland's haughty terms gave way,
For argument were vain ;
Yielded command of his own force.
And all interference in the course
Of action on the battle-day.
And Friedland thus became the source
And wielder of the Catholic power,
Supreme in Germany from that hour.
In both their armies' sight combined
The leaders show their alter'd mind,
Eternal friendship feign,
By acting there a dissembled part,
While from their eyes fierce flashes dart,
Embracing closely heart to heart
Where scorn and hatred reign.

Gustavus had some time before,
As soon as Friedland's armament
Threaten'd the Saxon lands with war,
Large succours to the Elector sent.

Such mortal foes, he had never thought,
As the Duke and Wallenstein,
Could ever in the mind be brought
Their forces to combine;
And now he was by far too weak
To keep the open field,
Much less offensive war to dare,
And his antagonist to seek;
But still the Hero's anxious care
Was his allies to shield.
At Donauwerth he were secure,
Supplies the river would assure,
And he could there in safety wait,
Forsaking Nuernberg to its fate
Until reinforcements came;
Or, if he chose, he could press on
For Vienna doubtless would be won
Long time ere Wallenstein's array
Could southward march and bar the way;
But Nuernberg had first claim.
Although almost in sight his goal,
Gustavus did not hesitate,
The war must swiftly backward roll.
Whatever might be Nuernberg's fate,
That fate Gustavus too would share:
His army he march'd promptly there.

The Monarch spent the time of grace,
Ere the enemy came in sight,
Outside the town new lines to trace,
Working both day and night
The outlying suburbs to embrace
Within the circling wall.
The burghers with his soldiers vied,
For all other work was laid aside;

And the peasants from the country hied,
 Responsive to the call,
Each lustily his utmost tried,
And tens of thousands shovels plied,
Digging a ditch some twelve feet wide,
 Building a rampart tall.
Soon bastions frown from end to end,
And half-moons all the gates defend,
 Daily the fortress grew;
High above the plain the work arose
Through which the river Pegnitz flows,
 Cutting the town in two;
Besides the bridges in the town
Two more the King, his work to crown,
 Across the river threw.
And thus, ere Wallenstein drew nigh,
Conclusions with the King to try,
Nuernberg was doubly fortified,
Encircled twice on every side,—
First, by her walls and her turrets high,
Which might alone assault defy,
 And by her moat, both deep and wide,
To cross a most serious obstacle;
 Then by Gustavus' finish'd lines,
Which now were fairly tenable
A sudden onslaught to repel,
 Whose wall a much wider space confined,
 In which, entrench'd, the King design'd
The coming of the foe to wait,
 And Nuernberg to the last defend;
And there, if such must be his fate,
 His life-blood for his Faith to spend.

Within the city order reign'd,
 No hurry nor confusion there,

No sign of faltering or despair!
Though their endurance much was strain'd
The Councillors all did their best,
Our Magistrate among the rest,

For a long siege to prepare.
From every side, by every road,
Into the town provisions flow'd,
Of corn and wine a good supply;
That there should be no scarcity

Their first and foremost care.
Through the long streets the wagons filed,
The granary floors were thickly piled,
Sack upon sack, with golden store,
Until they at length could hold no more,
And never had the burghers seen
Such lofty stacks of hay, I ween.
Vast herds of cattle, driven in

From the whole country round,
Were penn'd the new-built lines within,
Till scarcely room was found.

The powder magazines were fill'd,
The clash of arms was never still'd;
All day and night the arsenal rang
With hammer blows and metal's clang;
All day and night the furnace-blast

The creaking bellows fiercely fed;
And cannon-balls were by thousands cast,
And streams of molten iron and lead
Flow'd through the channels free and fast,
Shooting forth gleams of dazzling red,
And a lurid glow on the workmen shed.

Their legs in leathern mail encased,
Their bodies naked to the waist,
Their faces guarded well by masks,
They hurried o'er their fiery tasks.

It was a horrid scene—
Black darkness lit by gloomy light !
And well in truth, I ween,
A stranger it might even affright
Who chanced to venture in !
And easily he might have thought
That demons at their tortures wrought
With damn'd, lost souls, as Priestcraft taught—
So unearthly was the murky glare,
And sulphurous the heavy air,
So deafening was the din !

And nearer, nearer, day by day,
March'd slowly Wallenstein's array—
The League's and Austria's might allied
Roll'd onward, a resistless tide
Of sixty thousand men.
To oppose this overwhelming force
But sixteen thousand foot and horse
With Gustavus now at Nuernberg stand ;—
For though he had forwarded command
To bid them turn again,
The troops he had to Saxony sent,
When Friedland's threatening armament
To Nuernberg took its southward way,
Must pass full many a weary day
Ere they could reach the King ;
And though on his allies for aid
Demands at once Gustavus made,—
In truth he had no need to ask,
To help him now their joyous task,—
Yet hardly could they bring,
Or Weimar's Duke, or the stout Landgrave,
Their troops in time the town to save,

Much less could they with him combine
Ere on the King proud Wallenstein
His fourfold odds would fling—
Their succours must come all too late,
Decided would be Gustave's fate.

At Neumarkt Friedland held review
Of all his mighty host,
Regiment on regiment following fast,
His flashing eye upon them cast,
Horse, foot, and guns, before him pass'd.
As to the tents the trumpets blew,
And the rear squadrons came at last,
Broke out the haughty boast—
He could no more himself contain,
Nor longer cared his mind to feign,
His arrogance had pass'd all bound,
And turning in his saddle round,
He spoke thus to his staff:
"Within four days, my lords, we will see
Which of us twain the King shall be,—
The master of the world!—
The King of Sweden — he or I—
For me it will no more satisfy,
To take of him the half!
The next four days will come and go,
Will witness Sweden's overthrow,—
His greatness headlong hurl'd!

The fourth day came, the fourth day went,
But Friedland's mighty armament
Lies still outside the town;
The Swedish lines the tyrant taunt,
For unfulfill'd is Friedland's vaunt,
Gustave still wears his crown.

Upon the King he dares not fall,
From Sweden's camp, from Nuernberg's wall,
Three hundred cannon frown ;
All Friedland's power these guns defy,
Assault even numbers may not try,
He dares not venture down.
It were easy task to idly boast,
But Stralsund's walls, a former host,
Another tale could tell ;—
And Friedland clearly had not yet
Forgotten—could he ever forget ?—
What there him once befell.
It was plain each stern determined Swede,
To a man behind his King would bleed,
Would Nuernberg dearly sell ;
Ere ever he the fortress won
It were possible each Swedish gun
Might boom his own death-knell.

Thus far the Duke might have excuse,
No general should his force abuse ;
But how, when outside Nuernberg's lines
Gustavus' troops front Wallenstein's ;—
How if he still look idly on,
And nothing even then be done ;—
What are ye of him constrain'd to say
Who aims at universal sway—
Who vaunts his might in boastful hour,
Yet shrinks to test his fourfold power
Upon the battle day ?
For scarce was Friedland well in sight
Ere Gustave boldly offer'd fight,
Drew up his small, but veteran might,
In battle's stern array :

But Friedland did not dare to close,
Another, safer plan he chose,
And thought to starve both the town and foes
 Whom, one to four, he fears.
And instead of making good his boast,
Right opposite Gustavus' post,
He too entrenches his vast host,
 And there a fortress rears ;
And digs and delves, as though his force,
Outnumber'd, had no other course ;
The spade and shovel their resource
 In dire extremity.
It is thus the weaker ever tries
His lesser might to equalise,
And to fortress or to earthwork flies
 To gain security ;
But never yet the world had seen,—
It was a novel sight, I ween,—
Some sixty thousand men refuse
 The offer'd battle in the plain,
Cast down their arms, the shovel choose,
 And with the wearying pickaxe strain
To earth themselves against a foe
Who but one-fourth their might can show.

Confronting thus, the armies lay,
And idly pass'd the livelong day ;
 For it was clearly seen
That Wallenstein had no intent
To launch his mighty armament,
 Since Gustave lay between,
Upon the Lutheran city's wall,
Nor yet on the Swedish camp to fall ;
 But rather to blockade,

To hold or cut up every road
By which supplies to Nuernberg flow'd,
Or troops could come to aid.
The city he could not surround,
The outworks covered too much ground
By regular siege to invest ;
And while Gustavus stood at bay
He dared not spread out his array,
But in his camp would rest
And wait till plague, provisions spent,
Among the hundred thousand pent
Within the city's wall,
Nuernberg's surrender should compel :
The Swedish Monarch then as well
The same fate would befall.

Of this the King was well aware :
Nor skill nor valour aught avail,
And useless is the general's care,
When once provisions fail ;
But the town was victualled for many a day,
Reinforcements too were on the way,—
He could afford to wait.
The troops the Duke of Weimar sent,
And Hesse's Landgrave's armament
Already Kitzingen have passed ;
The Saxon regiments follow fast,
And their despatches state
Bernard of Weimar's force is near,
And Banner will ere long appear,
Nuernberg will soon have nought to fear.
So Gustave Eric called :
" Ride, Eric,—by the shortest way
Thou mayest reach Windsheim yet to-day,—
Once there, to Oxenstierna say,
My camp is strongly walled ;

My troops in safe entrenchments lie,
Which Friedland's power can well defy;
Assault he will not dare to try:

 Since in the open field,
When first his army came in sight,
He did not care to risk a fight,
He will not hurl on us his might

 Now finished earthworks shield.
Tell him at Windsheim he must wait,
And there all succours concentrate;
He must not move at all until
He can move forward with a will;
Then, marching with sufficient force,
Friedland dare not dispute his course.
No present cause is there for speed,

 The time will not be spent in vain,
If he bring in what most we need,—
For many mouths we shall have to feed,—

 A long provision train;
Supplies must be his foremost care,
For we must Nuernberg's granaries spare.

Haste thee to him, and there rest the night;
But set out with the dawning light

 Again on thy return,
For stirring work may be in store—
And, well I know, for daring war

 Adventurous spirits burn!
News has come in which I would try,
So Rudolph is sent out to spy

 Along the Regensburg road;
Safely he'll pass, though lined with foes,
Each forest track and each path he knows—
 No danger I forebode.

Friedland, it seems, has sent a force
Consisting of a thousand horse
Supplies and cattle to escort
Which in Bavaria he has bought :
If we ourselves can but assure
Of their halting-places every night,
The whole convoy we may secure,
Surprise, or put the troops to flight.
But go now, and on thy return
Thy part therein thou too shalt learn."

Away went Eric, all day long
Without a halt his steed bestrode,
And, pressing still with spur and thong,
At eve he into Windsheim rode ;
There to a stand by the sentry brought,
He Oxenstierna's presence sought,
As bearing message of import,
Sent by his Liege the King.
As through the streets he trotted fast,
In clattering gallop horsemen passed ;—
All Windsheim clearly is astir !
To scabbard's clang and jingling spur
The flinty pavements ring,
The market-place with troops is lined,
It is plain a night march is designed ;
The narrow streets the wagons crowd,
Drums beat, and trumpets sound aloud,
The leaders hoarsely call.
In hurry Eric onward pressed,
And now an officer addressed
Where Oxenstierna might be found,
For on weighty errand he was bound.
"Within the old townhall

The Chancellor a council holds,
His plan of this night's march unfolds ;
And weighty may thine errand be,
A captain he will scarcely see,"

The officer replied,
"Colonels and generals him surround :
To Nuernberg even now we are bound" !—
But Eric cut the answer short,
Scarcely his steed to stand he brought,

Press'd onward on his ride.
And now before the townhall gate,
Where officers and horsemen wait,
He vaults from off his jaded steed,
And bids a lad the courser heed ;

Past both the sentries goes :
"A message from my Liege the King
To his Chancellor I am charged to bring ;"—
No password more is needed there,
While still the astonished soldiers stare
The doors behind him close.

But not for long ; they open again,
The Chancellor and his attendant train

Come from the council halls :
The colonels to the market-place
Stride forth at once with hurried pace,
And each his bugler calls.
Drums beat anew, and trumpets sound,
No longer the advance.

The townsmen look inquiring round,
And ask with wond'ring glance
The meaning of this countermand,
And movements none can understand,
As through the streets in steady tramp
Wind back the regiments into camp.

With Oxenstierna Eric goes,
The generals still attend,
The King's resources to disclose,
The evening hours to spend ;
And Eric to the Chancellor shows,
Ten thousand men to send,
Even could they safely pass their foes,
Would not attain the end
Gustavus ever kept in view,
To attack they still would be too few ;
While for defence he none requires,
The King has all that he desires ;
More troops without supplies would be
But a source of more anxiety.
A long and ponderous wagon train
Cannot expect the town to gain,
Unless convoy'd by a powerful force,
Say fifty thousand foot and horse ;
And even then it will need much skill,
To pass his camp upon the hill,
Exposing still to Wallenstein
A long-extended, weaken'd line.
At Windsheim must the Chancellor wait,
And here a transport train create :
When Bernard, Banner, both are come,
Must only then the place forsake,
And push at once the wagons home ;
While Gustave does diversion make,
On Friedland's lines in sally falls,
Gain safety under Nuernberg's walls.
His task the Chancellor understood,
Supplies at once he would collect
Which should the waste make more than good ;
Reinforcements might the King expect
Within a fortnight's time ;

Then he would send the Monarch word
That all was ready for the fight,
And when again from him he heard
He would break up his camp that night

And march from out Windsheim.
Ere Friedland knew that he was near
One morn he would his trumpets hear,
And he would fall upon his rear

While Gustave press'd his front ;
And ere he found the attack was feign'd
They would their object have attain'd,
The wagons shelter would have gain'd

During the battle's brunt.
It was thus arranged ; at break of day
Eric took his leave and rode away,
And, without molestation pass'd

Within Gustavus' lines,
And nothing saw from first to last
Of troops of Wallenstein's,
Though wasted fields and hamlets show'd
His foragers that way had rode.

Rudolph, he found had safe return'd,
And had of the convoy tidings learn'd ;
But Eric must himself present,

And therefore could not wait :
To the King at once in camp he went,
But heard he had pass'd the Spittler Gate
To make his wonted weekly round,
And on the ramparts would be found.
Thither he sped ;—a prospect bright
Was spread to his admiring eyes,
For, from the rampart's giddy height
The Swedish camp before him lies
As in a bird's-eye view,

While, in the distance far away,
Now clearly spread before the sight,
Lit by the slanting sunbeam's ray,
Each tent the merest speck of white
Upon the hill-sides' blue,
The hostile camp is plainly seen,
And the Rednitz' winding flood between
Appears a silver thread ;
But, looking inward o'er the town,
Above whose walls huge cannon frown,
A sea of tiles is spread,
From which fantastic gables rise,
And spires point upward to the skies,
Still towering overhead ;
While to the north upon a rock,
Against which the ruddy billows beat,
And trembling in the July heat
As though it really felt the shock,
A mass of glowing red,
Its battlements the castle rears
And the guardian of the town appears,
As now at this 'hot noontide hour
Upon its quaint five-sided tower
The sunlight full is shed.
But Eric did not stop to gaze
Across the city's quivering haze,
Nor did he stay to scan the height
Where Friedland's tents lay full in sight,
But onward swiftly sped,
And as he turn'd a turret's bound
Which out the walls arose,—
As many turrets there are found
As days the whole year shows,
Encircling Nuernberg in their ring,—
He suddenly came upon the King.

"Oh! it is Eric," Gustave said,
As at his step he turned his head,
"Ay, lad, I see that all is well!
And as I now have made the round,
And to the camp am even bound,
Thou mayest thy message tell."
Then Eric told as on they went
How he the time at Windsheim spent,
And ere they reach'd the Monarch's tent
Gustavus knew the whole,
And, liking well the Chancellor's plan,
Would leave him full control;
For Oxenstierna was a man
He trusted from his soul,
Upon whose judgment he relied,
A useful counsellor at his side.
His talents might even Genius guide,

Within the Soldier-monarch's tent
A simple meal is spread;
"Come, Eric, thou must needs be spent,"
His gracious Sovereign said,
"After thy hasty morning's ride,—
Come sit, and rest thee by my side,—
A soldier may with a soldier share,
Thy Monarch's is but soldier's fare!
But thou,—come of my meat partake,—
A royal meal canst doubtless make,—
And, as we dine, thy part will show,
For truly we shall spoil the foe!
A herd of beasts, twelve hundred head,
And a thousand wagons packed with bread,
To-morrow night we will surprise
And capture under Friedland's eyes.

Towards Regensburg as he was bidden
Rudolph a march or two has ridden,
And from the heights above the road

The approaching team has seen,
As through the valley slowly flow'd,

The dark pine woods between,
The stream of wagons broad and long,
The convoy scarce a thousand strong.
To-morrow night, the peasants say,
Ere they resume their tedious way,
Awhile near Altdorf they will stay,

And in a village wait
The regiments Wallenstein will send
To guard them to their journey's end,
Which, at the most, I apprehend,

Will number seven or eight.
And, in good truth, a powerful force,
And strong enough to hold the course !
But yet, methinks, we can devise
Some means to capture such a prize ;
Methinks, they were not dearly bought
Even if a skirmish should be fought :
More welcome since they are Wallenstein's
Twelve hundred oxen in our lines !"

Next morn in preparation pass'd

Till all was duly done ;
And the summer day drew in at last,
And now has set the sun :

The night is dark, yet not so black
That the horsemen cannot see the track,
A thousand strong they ride ;
While through the gates, in silence dread,
Seven chosen regiments after sped
With swift and stealthy, muffled tread.

As out the lines they glide,
At the Spittler and the Ladies' Gate
The trainbands quickly concentrate
To occupy the posts that late
 The Swedes held on that side.
But on the north, and on the west,
 Both in the camp and on the walls,
The leaguer'd city seems at rest ;
 The sentry's wonted footstep falls
 As every day before ;
The watchfires gleam as ever bright
 Far in advance of the foremost line ;
The Swedish pickets watch the night,
 Confronting those of Wallenstein,
 As always through the war.
No movement should the foe perceive
 That could Gustavus' plans betray,
Fresh sentinels their mates relieve
 Who wend to the camp their backward way,
 Their spell of duty done.
That night like many another pass'd,
 And haughty Friedland little thought,
His eye upon the earthwork cast
 At sunrise, as the air he sought,
 Where was its garrison.

But see! what means that cloud of smoke
 Beyond the city, in the plain?
Clear has the summer morning broke,
 It is not mist,—he looks again,
Nay, it is smoke, and now appears
 Another cloud, a cloud of dust,
And through it gleams the flash of spears.
 His palm across his face is thrust,
 His eyes the sunlight blinds:

At length, accustomed to the glare,
He gazes long on the smoke-cloud there,
Then fixes on the dust his eye,
To pierce the veil it is vain to try,

He no solution finds.

While still with his hand he shades his face

A horseman gallop'd to his side,

Rein'd short his horse : " Ill news, your Grace !

The transport is taken," the soldier cried,

" And the regiments all dispersed !"

The truth at once on Friedland flash'd,

The meaning of the dust and smoke.

In towering rage his teeth he gnash'd,

And furious accents from him broke,

As the messenger he cursed,

In awful storm to his wrath gave vent,

His passion on the luckless trooper spent ;

And long it was ere he sober'd down,

And longer ere relax'd his frown :

Yet anew his rage outburst,—

" Fool, arrant fool ! still here to stand ;

Go, launch the army on the walls,

Give to my trumpeter command,

It matters nought what now befalls,

The advance forthwith to sound.

Haste thee, dost hear ! and thou shalt pay

With thine own block head if he delay !

Go, bid at once the regiments form !

This very day the town I will storm,

And burn it to the ground.

Ay, I will teach the Swedish King

Himself across my path to fling,

And Heaven and Earth, ay, and Hell I will move,

But Nuernberg yet shall Magdeburg prove,

And its site no more be found !"

The selfsame morn, at the selfsame hour,
A bevy of joyous maidens wait
Upon the battlements of the tower
That soars above the Ladies' Gate,
And Hilda has come betimes from her bower,
And stands by the side of the Magistrate.
And every eye on the cloud is cast
Which now approaches the city fast,
And every tongue is loosed to sing
The praise of some fond gallant youth,
And every maid in the beauteous ring
Has cause for joy and praise, in sooth :
In yonder band each can discover
A brother, or perchance a lover.
Maiden ! if it has been thy fate
Ever the livelong night to wait
In dread anxiety,
If thou hast e'er that misery felt,
The night long at thy bedside knelt
As hour by hour pass'd by ;
If still in supplicating prayer
The dawn has found thee kneeling there
That Heaven in mercy him might spare
To whom thy heart is given ;
If the lone night watch thou thus hast spent,
Within thy bosom thine anguish pent,
And Heaven at morn hath answer sent
For which thy tears have striven—
If thus in dread the darkness pass'd
But with the dawn came joy at last,
Thou wilt understand the happy song
And the loosen'd tongues of the maiden throng,
Who upon the tower of the Ladies' Gate
Their lovers' return expectant wait.
For before the dawn the King had heard,
Fast flew through the city the welcome word,

That all was well, and the German horse
Had captured the train and sustain'd no loss.
The convoy in panic fled,
But were ridden down, to a man they fell,
And only the drovers escaped to tell
The tale of the night surprise ;
The captured oxen were driven away,
And would reach the town with the early day,
But the troops had burn'd the bread,
Though it was done reluctantly,
The King at dawn the smoke would see
Mount upward to the skies ;
For a thousand wagons' ponderous loads
Would be much too long upon the roads,
They had no other course ;
For they knew the King could not succour send,
Could not both the train and his lines defend
Against Friedland's fourfold force.

The bridge is lower'd, and open'd wide
The gates, as now the lancers ride
Three horsemen there abreast ;
Beneath the tower the ranks defile,
And as they pass'd its massive pile
Bent many a gallant crest ;
And the boldest spirit felt more brave,
And to dauntless cheeks the proud flush flew,
As the joyous maids their kerchiefs wave
To cousin, or brother, or lover true :
Even those for whom no maidens wait
Upon the tower of the Ladies' Gate,
Volunteers who hail from the northern strand,
All strangers in this southern land,
Whose sisters and sweethearts are far away
Who have not known for many a day

The love-touch of a maiden's kiss,—
Stern warriors, yet they would gladly die
To win each such a glance from his lady's eye,
And promptly would their daring prove
To be thus rewarded with looks of love,—
A Heaven-on-earth of bliss.

The horsemen pass, and now the road
With lowing, steaming herds is block'd,
In a bewildering maze.
In endless stream the oxen flow'd,
Thick on the walls the burghers flock'd
Upon the sight to gaze.
An hour or more the cattle pass'd,
And few of the ladies stay'd,
Tripp'd lightly away to break her fast
Each blooming, happy maid;
For keen was the healthful morning blast
The appetite to aid.
But Hilda on the tower delay'd,
For Eric would come at last,
And Rudolph too she fain would see,
Next dearest to her heart was he;
Until they came she there would wait,
Would remain by the side of the Magistrate:—
And see, at length they come!
The rearguard now appears in sight,
Their lances flashing in the light,
In the camp loud beats the drum;—
The bands strike up, the trumpets sound,
The cannons' thunder shakes the ground,
The lightnings from the ramparts flash,
The bells a joyous welcome clash,
The burghers shout a lusty cheer
As through the gate they ride,

The colonel proud to close the rear,
Eric and Rudolph on either side.
And as Hilda strives to wave her hands
Close behind her King Gustavus stands.

“Ah, Hilda, I wish thee a blithe good day,
Thou art betimes at the vantage post;
It is easy to see who rides this way—
One dearer to thee than all the host.
Our Magistrate too! I am proud to say
This night thou may'st thy life long boast!
To Rudolph the honour is chiefly due;—
I mean all I say, for indeed it is true:
For he this expedition planned,
And held throughout the chief command,
And brought his task so well about
That our horsemen put the train to rout
Without losing a single man;
And our regiments defeated the covering force
Sustaining but a trifling loss,
So well laid was his plan.
His wagons Wallenstein will rue—
Twelve hundred head of oxen too!
In truth it is a goodly prize,
And snatched from under his very eyes.
Ha! I can picture Friedland's wrath
When first the news upon him broke,
The storm of fury that burst forth
When he beheld the rising smoke:
I quite expected that our foe
His forces on our lines would throw,
And rush down in assault!
And indeed it was clear at first he meant,
But he quickly changed his fierce intent,
For his trumpets call'd a halt

Before his troops had time to form,
Ere could close up the columns our camp to storm.
It seems that whatever we do is in vain,
Within his entrenchments he still will remain :
One would think the odds were reversed, and that we
Were the stronger force as we yet may be.
Well Hilda, now they all have pass'd,
Eric and Rudolph too, at last,
 Shall we in turn go down ?
No use the infantry to wait,
They will enter by the Laufer Gate
 And then march through the town.
I shrewdly guess, eh, Hilda fair !
To thee is small attraction there ;
Yet if thou wilt a guest invite
From thy father's house we will view the sight."

The Monarch led the blushing maid
 Down the winding steps of the Ladies' Tower ;
Outside the walls the trumpets play'd,
 Inside the bells peal'd hour by hour :
 And, on the breezes borne,
The martial strains, the bells' mad clang,
As lusty chimes each belfry rang,
The roll of the drums, and the ringing notes
Pour'd from the clarions' brazen throats,
 Mingling with fife and horn,
Are wafted all the valley down,
Swell to the hills beyond the town,
 Pierce savage Friedland's ears ;
His wrath well nigh to frenzy lash,
As still the tumultuous joy-bells clash,
 And the loud strains he hears
But yet his troops all idle lie,
Nor does he dare assault to try.

He sees his loaded wagons burn,
His herds of cattle driven in
 In triumph to the walls ;
He sees the Swedish force return,
And suffers them the gates to win,
 And his trumpeter recalls.
His new-found power he will not waste,
There is no need for him to haste ;
Let him but in his lines remain,
The town by famine he will gain.

Though Friedland ever seeks delay,
In petty skirmish day by day
 The opposing troopers meet.
Both the Swedes and Austrians forage sought,
For provender both parties fought
 Till every field of wheat,
For the harvest was not gather'd in,
Re-echoed to their battle-din ;
And loads of hay, and wains of corn,
In triumph to the town were borne,
Or, when the Austrians gain'd the day,
Were carted to their lines away ;—
Until at length the camps between
Nor standing crops, nor herbage green,
 Were left for which to fight ;
The smiling country all around
Was trampled into dusty ground,
 A sorry, barren sight :
Both sides must further still afield,
Whole regiments now the sickle wield,
 And, at the signal shown,
Throw down the scythe, and grasp the sword,
And, marshalling at the colonel's word,
 Close up to hold their own,

And for the half-cut harvest fight,
Or yield it to superior might.

Thus pass'd another week, and then
The Chancellor could take the field,
Commanding fifty thousand men
He could his train of wagons shield.
His Sovereign's aid he scarce would need,
So powerful was his armament,
But ere he moved, as was agreed,
He messengers to Gustave sent;
Then marching hurriedly all night,
He seized the bridge near Eltersdorf,
And entrench'd a force, by morning light,
To hold the Austrian cavalry off,
Until he should himself appear
To threaten Friedland's flank and rear.
And soon the army came in sight,
All eager to begin the fight;
While Gustave at the Rednitz' bank
Drew up his men in battle-rank,
Ready to attack in front the foe,
Should Friedland opposition show,
And storm the Austrian lines.
But even now he would not move,
Would not his might in battle prove,—
Far different his designs;
In vain may Oxenstierna close,
In vain Gustave defiance throws,
Safely entrench'd within the earth
He trusts by pestilence and dearth
The city yet to win.
He will not now, will never fight—
The larger is Gustavus' might,

The greater soon must be his need,—
The more the mouths there will be to feed
 The ramparts pent within.
No, he will simply still blockade,
And famine, plague, his task shall aid,
Content his mighty power to sway,
The gainer ever by delay.

All day the armies fronting stood,
 Expecting ever the attack :
His march the Chancellor still made good,
 His wagon train still kept the track,
All night the rumbling transport flow'd
 Heavily onward down the road ;
All night the soldiers stand to arms
 Waiting ever their scouts' alarms,
Through the dark hours their eyes they strain,
But all their watching is in vain ;
The midnight pass'd, the morning broke,
Still is undeliver'd the hostile stroke.—

 Is Friedland fast asleep ?
Four thousand wagons are safely o'er,
The whole convoy has gain'd the Nuernberg shore,
 Yet their foes still their trenches keep :
The infantry pass'd over next,
 And following them some sixty guns ;
Even Friedland's soldiers stand perplex'd,
 From rank to rank amazement runs,
As Oxenstierna now falls back
And follows in the wagons' track,
Is suffer'd to withdraw his force
Which hitherto had held the course ;
The other bank they safely gain,
The cavalry now alone remain,
 And they bring up the rear :

Thus unmolested by the foe,
Without striking even a single blow,
Gustavus' lines they near,
And with the Monarch's force combine,
While idle still stands Wallenstein.

These succours Oxenstierna led
Number'd some fifty thousand men,
A battering train of sixty guns,
Four thousand wagons of corn and bread ;—
And Gustave now stands at the head
Of a hundred thousand warriors, when
To his ranks are added Nuernberg's sons,
All in his cause prepared to shed,
If needs, their hearts' best blood.
To meet this now imposing might,
Scarce less a force, equipp'd for fight,
Entrench'd with Friedland stood ;
For day by day his numbers grew,
As he received reinforcements too.
Round Nuernberg centred all the war,
And Europe, fascinated, saw,
Nor could avert her gaze ;—
No more than when the thundercloud,
Red with fork'd lightning's blaze,
Spreads o'er the sky its livid shroud,
Hangs o'er the earth its pall,
Can we, although the bolt we dread
Which from the warring heavens o'erhead
With the next flash will fall,
Avert our eyes ; we must admire
The bursting of the firmament,
The skies convulsed, all space on fire,
The black-red vault in a moment rent,

Igniting even our lower air
With the sulphurous breath of the lurid glare.

How long confronting thus they lay,
And who at last then gain'd the day—
The generous, single-minded King,
Faith, Freedom, aye his life's mainspring;
Or his scheming, selfish foe,
Who, wading though his country's gore,
Sought only to prolong the war,
Careless though blood in torrents ran,
Regardless both of God and man—
Another book must show.





BOOK X.

The Attack upon Wallenstein's Camp.

ARISES fierce the torrid August sun,
Impetuous in his haste his course to run,
Shooting, a streaming messenger on high,
He mounts at once up right into the sky,
And dissipates forthwith the mists of night,
A blazing orb of dazzling, blinding light.
'Twas but few hours ago he sunk to rest
Far in the northern heavens beyond the west,
Now, ere the hot, parch'd earth has time to cool,
He starts once more the brazen skies to rule,
And from his narrow'd bed again bursts forth
To pour anew his withering glare of wrath,
And rises as he set from chamber in the north.

And still upon a close blockaded town,
On Friedland's distant camp his beams shoot down :
As soon as on the plain his ray appears
'Tis mirror'd in the flashing pikes and spears,
Where Gustave's sentries still the night-watch keep,
And Swedish trumpets now arouse from sleep ;
Where Nuernberg's towers and walls by burghers mann'd,
From out a barren, wasted country stand ;

Where, in their trenches burrow'd in the hill,
The Austrian might lies sullen, idle still.
The town, the hills, with clang of arms resound,
No other arts but those of war are found;
And War leads in his aye attendant train,
No happy peasants labour in the plain,
Disease and Pestilence o'er herded myriads reign.

Within a turret chamber in the town,
Close to the walls which now defiance frown,
A spacious room, though reach'd by winding stair,
Its windows open'd to the cool night air,
Is stretch'd the Magistrate, unconscious lies he there.

Around his couch, in silence, sorrowing stand,
Gustavus, Rudolph, Eric, close at hand:
His mother, Hilda, yielding to despair,
Since now avails, nor mother's, daughter's, care,
At his bedside in tearless anguish kneel,—
The keenest anguish Woman e'er can feel,
When hope is fled, and yet the brimming eye
Must not betray the wrung heart's agony;
When not a sob, a sigh, a look, may show
Within her breast the hidden sorrow's flow.
Not yet the pent-up flood may find relief,
Not yet may she indulge her useless grief;
Her feelings she must keep in close control,
And hang a veil upon her bleeding soul;
A cheerful countenance must even feign,
Her sorrow must not cause the dear one pain,
Her love itself may not Love's tearful torrents rain.

The Magistrate to every detail saw,
And held a foremost place throughout the war,

Taxing to breaking strain his failing strength,
And, victim to his zeal, succumb'd at length;—
Heedful the town to well provision first,
Ere yet the threat'ning storm upon it burst;
Supply of war material to prepare,
The arsenal, foundry, needed constant care;
Then on the ramparts and the city walls
On him the task of supervision falls;
When fever raged within the city's bound,
The Magistrate was in the sick wards found;
When plague broke out among the thousands pent,
Within the hospitals his time was spent;
And pestilence stalk'd through the Lutheran host
To find him ever dauntless at his post:
Heedless of ev'n the foul infection's breath,
He fearless braved an ever-threatening death,
Till, stricken by the sun's fierce flaming ray,
He was brought senseless home one burning day,
And now his life it seem'd would ebb in trance away.

But no, for as again the morning broke,
The sufferer from his restless trance awoke.
At first it seem'd his dim and watery eye
Was nerveless fix'd and stared on vacancy,
But soon his glance around the chamber roved,
And settled on the faces that he loved.
Some time in silence each in turn he scann'd,
And then at length he feebly raised his hand,
And as they smooth'd the pillows to his head,
And bathed his burning brow, he faltering said:
"Come nearer, Hilda dear, and Eric too;
Come nearer, both!—my hours I feel are few,
Too few, I fear, for all I fain would say,
My powers ev'n now are ebbing fast away.

My children! I had hoped, but Heaven knows best,
To see you wedded ere I pass'd to rest;
Nay, I had even hoped to live to see
Your children sporting on their Grandsire's knee:
It was a dream of bliss, but now it may not be.

"Nay, Hilda, love, no need for such distress!
Give me thine hand,—thine, Eric,—I would bless
You both, my children, thus ere I depart,
And I do bless you, dying, from my heart.
If Eric must his wife to Sweden take,
I hope ye will not Traubeneck forsake,
But make it, keep it still your German home,
And every year in autumn thither come:
It was thy mother's, Hilda; mine own bride,
Eric, I won, too, by the glad Rhine's tide;
Methought when I awoke, I saw her by my side.

"Thou art her likeness, Hilda,—thou art grown
Her very image; each inflected tone
Of her sweet, silvery voice in thine I hear;
The sight of thee aye brings her presence near:
The same blue eyes, the same sweet gentle face,
The same in every slightest movement's grace,—
The springing fairy step as light as air,
The waving ripple of the golden hair,—
In every feature, too, I see her mother there.

"Eric! what Hilda is—will be to thee,
My Hilda, 'twas her name, was once to me,
And now again in Heaven will ever, ever be!

"Rudolph, to thee I leave an honour'd name,—
Thou wilt, I know, add to thy fathers' fame!

For generations we have held our place,
On Nuernberg's burgher roll we proudly trace,
To Wrong foes ever, friends to Liberty,
An ancient and unsullied pedigree.
The times are troublous; yet, lad, they have been
Troubled, unsettled, oft before, I ween:
Thou wilt a settled course in danger steer,
Press by conviction onward without fear.
Let Conscience guide thee in the doubtful fight,
Nor ever think she will not guide aright,
And keep before thee still through life the haven in sight.

"Mother, my daughter to thy care I leave
Till Eric weds her—nay now, wherefore grieve?
It is at most a few short years or so,—
And what are they to Heaven's eternal flow,—
Ere we shall meet again its endless joys to know!

"Great King, when Man has done with earthly things,
And soon shall stand before the King of Kings;
When from the clay his soul must wing its flight
His reason soars aloft to clearer height—
Just as the flickering candle's failing fires
Burst out in grander blaze as it expires.
In his last hours, the littleness of men
He will perceive, if never seen till then!
When the last rays of life light up the mind,
He then will see, though he before were blind,—
At death-bed's side the mightiest earthly king,
Whose praise the wide world doth unite to sing,
Is, like himself, but animated dust,
To soul immortal, but a mortal crust.
Not then in rank or titles—vanities,
Earthly of earth—the grand distinction lies;—

No longer will he stoop to child of clay,
No more to sceptred Monarch homage pay,
But to his God alone, his Saviour, turn to pray.

"No longer, then, as King, but as my friend,
Would I address thee, now I near mine end—
And the more freely even as I know
To insincerity thou art a foe.
Thou art the Lutheran champion, and we hail
Thy powerful succour, which can scarcely fail :
We know that thou wouldst even yield thy life,
A royal martyr in Religion's strife ;
Thy crown, thy sceptre thou wouldst sacrifice,
Should Freedom, Faith, demand the heavy price ;
One thing alone we Germans dread of thee—
How will it speed with German liberty ?—
Germans, while Lutherans sing, may wail thy victory."

"Nay," said the King, "my friend, I will not hide
From thee mine inmost soul ; whate'er betide,
However dazzling may my victories be,
However great the opportunity,
A tyrant's throne I trust I should refuse,
My heaven-sent mission dare I not abuse.
Ere I would German liberties abate,
I would pray Heaven to hasten on my fate ;
While yet I could my fame unsullied call
Would pray I might in battle stainless fall.
Ambition is the Monarch's subtlest snare,
Its mesh entangles ere he is aware,
With victory it tightens still its hold,
And closer wraps him with its brilliant fold.
Ambition, Virtue, in the Ruler's mind,
Are kingly ever while they are combined ;

The youthful Hero makes a noble start,
There comes a day when he from one must part,
No longer both can sway a pure, ingenuous heart.

"Not yet that day has come :—within my soul
Ambition, Virtue, yet divide control ;—
Ambition righteous I may boldly trust,
My motives stainless, as my cause is just.
Should e'er the day arrive when I must choose—
I pray God grant me grace to still refuse
The glittering bait, Ambition's worldly lure,
And make my calling and election sure.
But, oh, my friend, who now stand'st on the brink
Of death's dark, rapid flood—I often think,
I too shall follow to the blissful beach,
Those glorious shores beyond thou soon wilt reach—
Our Father in His wise and tender care
In mercy me the choice will even spare !
Our Lutheran liberties and Freedom won,
My short career on earth may well be done—
Exchanging fleeting for eternal rule,
The Master may require in Heaven His Tool :
For in the countless spheres of boundless space,
Millions beyond the millions Man can trace,
Ambition sanctified will surely find a place!"

Ambition, Genius, here go hand in hand—
Man has not power their influence to withstand ;
Too oft to him a snare by Evil made,
Both, though too oft with dross of earth o'erlaid,
Are still the remnants of that heavenly spark
That burns within us where all else were dark--
The flames of Genius are no earthly fires,
Ambition soaring evermore aspires—

Will then the Author Who did both create
One from the other ever separate?
He Who His force to Man's soul once hath given
Will doubtless find a use for it in Heaven.
There, as on earth, will be diversity
Of character through all Eternity;
Distinctiveness the Soul will still retain,
However glorious lustre it may gain.
As various jewels shine with varied light,
Some diamonds more than others flash more bright;
Ev'n in the rough the craftsman can discern
That this stone will with greater radiance burn;
So the observer here on earth may see
Some souls flash out with more intensity,—
When perfected above how bright their light will be!

And as the various jewels varying shine,
Each in its own peculiar blaze divine,
So will the diverse characters of soul
Shine forth in Heaven, each as a perfect whole.
The craftsman doth the ruby not refuse,
Nor doth he deem the emerald no use;
He still admires their green and ruddy light,
Though not so lustrous as the diamond's white:
Not to the emerald doth he seek by art
The brilliant's dazzling radiance to impart;
But heightens still the ruby's gorgeous glow,
And cuts the diamond clearer rays to throw,
Till each at length is perfect as a gem,
And fitted for a monarch's diadem.
Thus is it with the soul, its earthly light
Will blaze in heaven more radiantly bright,
Each in its own degree a wondrous, glorious sight.
Yet there will be this difference: here below
The jewel can but perfect glory show,

And when the craftsman once hath done his best
Its glory then must with perfection rest :
Here we are bounded by finality,
There Time is transform'd to Eternity ;
And where no limits are to time or space
Comparisons no longer can we trace.
Perfection is at once—at once attain'd,
And yet perfection still is ever gain'd ;
The soul soars ever there at highest flight,
And yet doth ever reach a greater height ;
God and ourselves at once we fully know,
Yet still are learning through the ages' flow,—
How this can be remains a mystery,
As here below it still must ever be,
But Heaven in Its own time will furnish us the key.

These were the themes the dying Magistrate
With Sweden's King, who by his bedside sate,
The morning long discuss'd at intervals ;
While on the rest assembled silence falls,
A hush'd expectancy of dread and awe,—
It seem'd as though Death present there they saw :
The King of Terrors still to them was King,
Though to the sufferer was removed his sting.
The sun rose higher in the sultry sky
Unspeck'd, save where a few white heat-clouds fly
Across the hazy, brazen vault's expanse.
The Magistrate again relapsed in trance :
For hours they watch'd him : as the sun went down,
Bathing in golden flood the thirsty town,
As the first puffs of cooling evening air
From the wide country found admittance there,
The dying man from this last trance awoke,
Distinct his utterance, though he feebly spoke :

"Hilda, my love, mine own," they heard him say,
And with the words his spirit pass'd away,—
Pass'd to the glorious light of Heaven's eternal day.

They buried him without the city wall
Where from tall spreading trees cool shadows fall
Where years ago he laid his youthful bride,
They laid him by his treasured Hilda's side :
There with his fathers' dust they laid his own,
And graved his homely virtues on the stone.
Ten generations since have pass'd way,
The tombstone yet remains there to this day,
His monument the stranger still may see
Beyond the walls in St. John's cemetery ;
But can no longer now the lettering trace,
Weather and time the graver's art efface :
The stone itself is green with moss and weed,
But Virtue doth not blazon'd sculpture need ;
Imperishable still, though stone decay,
Virtue remains, though Time shall pass away,
Self-sacrificing Love shall hold eternal sway !

* * * * *

Days, weeks pass'd by, yet fiercer grew the heat,
Still fiercer on the earth the sunbeams beat ;
Now of the plague a hundred daily die,
Nor from the city can the healthy fly.
Friedland will not attack, nor cares the King
His reinforcements on his lines to fling ;
He who assaults is almost sure to lose,
Both camps are far too strong attack to choose.
Though hopeless task the city to blockade,
Since famine now no more his plans will aid,

Still Wallenstein holds sullenly his post,
Will neither launch nor yet withdraw his host.
One hundred thousand stand on either side,
Besiegers now by want are sorely tried ;
The wasted country them no more maintains,
But in the leaguer'd town still plenty reigns.
In spite of plague, the Swedes gain by delay,
Within their lines the Austrians cannot stay,
Friedland must soon attack or draw his force away.

So thought the King, so thought the burghers too,
But Friedland's cruel heart they little knew :
It matter'd not what might his troops befall,
His soldiers' lives he valued not at all.
If he could only gain his selfish end,
He would not hesitate thereto to spend
His army's welfare, even all mankind's :
But noble souls conceive not sordid minds,
And Gustave cannot be to blame for this
He fathom'd not the villany of his ;
For Wallenstein intended ne'er to fight,
But keep in hand an overpowering might,
Until the time should come when he could use
His power for vengeance as he then might choose :
No opportunity would Friedland ever lose.

He cared not though his army starving lay,
The Swedes by pestilence would waste away :
He would not risk a fight, he shrewdly thought
If won at all, it would be dearly bought ;
If lost, his power would be for ever gone,
His hopes of vengeance, and the Kaiser throne.
So long as he the mightier power could wield,
He wish'd Gustavus still to keep the field ;

At Nuernberg he could waste the whole campaign,
Rebellion to mature the time would gain,
To drop the mask he saw not yet his way,
Gustavus' presence would excuse delay.
And still he hoped he might ev'n yet succeed,
His overtures Gustavus still might heed,
And could he but combine their double might
His goal of vengeance would be well in sight.
The Kaiser was to both a common foe,
The Swedish King his scruples might forego;
The German sceptre would be all his own
If Gustave aim'd not at the Kaiser throne:
And Friedland now at last it seem'd perceived,—
Though even yet he hardly it believed,
So difficult 'tis for the sordid mind
The hero's lofty motive's aim to find;
So difficult for it to comprehend
Ambition can have aught but selfish end,—
That Gustave's proud professions were sincere
Religion's champion only to appear,
That from his conquering arms Freedom had nought to fear.

Thus neither army ventured on attack,
Their differing motives kept both leaders back:
The Swedes remain'd within the city's lines,
The Austrians idle lay in Wallenstein's;
The Swedes to pestilence became a prey,
The Austrians famine wasted fast away.
Some fifty days had lasted the blockade,
And Friedland still no sign of moving made,
His troops might suffer, but he did not care,
He was not wont his armies e'er to spare;
He held the soldier owed his flag a life
Which he must render in the battle's strife,

Or sickness or fatigue the debt would claim—
It matter'd not, it was at last the same.
The angry sun glared fiercer from the sky,
In greater numbers still the Lutherans die :
It grieved the noble Monarch's kindly soul,
The sight of suffering he could not control.
His own supplies at last were dwindling down,
He soon would have to draw upon the town ;
It would be better now, Gustavus thought,
To assault the camp, although with danger fraught
If in the plain between no battle could be fought.

Accordingly, once more in full array
His army on the five and fiftieth day,
Gustavus led out all in battle rank,
Threw up three batteries on the Rednitz' bank ;
Into the Austrian lines his balls he threw,
As far as Friedland's tent the missiles flew.
His outposts, too, the Austrian outposts taunt,
And in their face fling Friedland's empty vaunt :
"How many four days yet must come and go
Ere he will venture to confront his foe?—
What is it that still keeps their General back?
Will he wait there until they him attack?—
Is it that he can no more trust his star?
Or has he quite forgot the art of war?—
Gustavus gives him opportunity,
Is he afraid his boasted might to try?
Defeat, not victory, doth Seni prophesy?"

But still, as aye it was before, in vain
Doth Gustave show his forces in the plain ;
In vain his soldiers taunts, defiance throw,
They make no impress on the sullen foe.

Friedland within his lines is quite content
To answer with his guns the challenge sent,
Still to each Swedish shot returns reply,
But in no other way will battle try ;
Gustavus may assault him if he will,
But otherwise remains he idle still.
At night the King his troops again withdrew,
Prepared at last the utmost now to do ;
Since Friedland nothing will induce to fight,
He will assault his lines with desperate might,
Relying on his Cause and confident of Right.

Had he been only by Ambition sway'd,
Gustavus other counsels had obey'd :
The Austrians suffer'd scarcity he knew,
And famine day by day more certain grew,—
He was the greater gainer by delay,
For Friedland's force would slowly melt away ;
His men he could not to his standards hold,
Already they desert, the prisoners told ;—
But how would it the while with Nuernberg fare ?
The pestilence already ravaged there ;
Though he would gain, quick would the death-rate rise
When to the plague were added short supplies—
Success he wish'd not at the cost of his allies.

Two days the King in preparation spends,
Himself in person to the work attends :
His camp and lines with Nuernberg's youth he mann'd,
The town entrusted to a second band.
His forces next he carefully reviews,
The bravest regiments he will need to use,—
Those on whose valour he can well rely,
Those whom he oft has led to victory,
Veterans of hard-fought fields, who scorn to yield or fly.

On the third morn the drums beat loud to arms,
And the harsh trumpets sound war's wild alarms ;
With the fast rising sun's first flaming ray
The martial strains proclaim the battle-day.
Each warrior lightly from his slumber springs,
And through the camp the clash of metal rings !
The soldiers quickly buckle harness on
Eager as though the fight were ev'n begun ;
The chargers, yet unharness'd, loudly neigh—
They know and hail with joy the trumpets' bray.
All is prepared, and now they break their fast,
And make a hurried yet a full repast,
And few there stop to think that it may be their last.

Already now the cannons' ponderous loads
Creak rumbling on along the dusty roads,
Already now the cavalry regiments trot
Across the country to the appointed spot ;
The army's vanguard leaves the Swedish camp,
Winds down the road to Fuerth with steady tramp ;
And now the main force on the march appears,
A moving wood of glittering pikes and spears.
The fords are without opposition won,
With Friedland's outposts skirmish is begun :
And soon the army safely is across,
Beyond the Rednitz stands the Swedish force—
The cannon's boom breaks on the sultry air,
And signal gives for battle to prepare,—
In front the hills arise, the foe's chief strength is there.

On one, the steepest, Friedland held his post,
From whence he could command his outspread host ;
The Alte Feste was the mountain named,
And well its strength bore out the title claim'd.

On it and on the Altenberg he placed
His whole artillery; his lines embraced,
Impregnable in strength, the mountain side,
Scarce could assault on it be even tried;
Deep ditches, ramparts, sharpen'd palisade,
The natural fortress even stronger made;
Down the approach, a narrow, slippery way,
In concentrated fire his cannon play;
Brushwood and tangled boughs the roadway block,
And iron spikes are driven in the rock.
Whatever strength from engineering skill
Could still be gain'd was lavish'd on the hill,
Though Nature hardly needed Art to aid—
And Friedland from its top his power survey'd,
In calm security his dispositions made.

This was the whole position's central key—
Defeated here, vain elsewhere victory;
While victory here were full and all complete,
And by itself would Wallenstein defeat:
For if by storm the Alte Feste fell,
Then his vast lines and trenches fall as well.
All this Gustavus, and its danger too,
The hill's great natural strength, most fully knew,
But still the bolder course determined to pursue.

The Monarch chose five hundred musketeers,
Among them interspersed some pikes and spears;—
Theirs first the honour on the foe to fall,
Less than a thousand men were they in all,—
On few he must rely to gain the day,
For numbers would but crowd the narrow way.
The ranks close up, uphill to certain death
The veterans march, their comrades hold their breath;

Already they have traversed half the space,
One ditch is pass'd, they climb the breastwork's face,
The foremost files the parapet now crown,
Within the work, they rush in triumph down.
Then first the sullen mountain's thunders broke,
And all the higher hill was wreathed in smoke,
From every cannon's mouth the lightnings flash'd,
Among the boughs the iron bullets crash'd;
The smoke rolls slowly down the mountain's side,
Until its fleecy folds the breastwork hide;
Within that veil the stormers disappear,
Rush boldly in with loud and pealing cheer,
Their anxious comrades well the worst for them may fear.

Loud on the hillside raged the contest there,
Rung shouts of triumph mingling with despair:
Volleys of musketry's long rolling rattle,
The dropping shots of stern determined battle;
The cannons' intermittent thunder-crash
Broke ever in upon the ceaseless clash
Of steel on steel, and drown'd at times the cry
Of swelling triumph or of agony.
Denser and denser grew the cloud of smoke,
Louder and louder still the thunders broke,
More deadly roll'd the volleys of the foes,
And fiercer yet their triumph-shouts arose—
In vain the stormers tried, they found they could not close.

The tangled boughs impeded now their course,
Through the dense thorns a road they could not force,
They would not turn, but, spent and out of breath,
They still press'd on, although to certain death;
Though melting fast before the withering fire,
Yet slowly, foot by foot, they clamber'd higher;

The foe before them they no more could see,
So dark became the smoke-cloud's canopy ;
Gaps in their ranks the hissing grape-shot tore,
The rocks were slippery with their comrades' gore,
Their feet the iron spikes and splinters rent,
They could not on, their strength they felt was spent.
Yet without orders would they not retreat,
For death far less they dreaded than defeat :
It was their Monarch who had sent them there,
They knew his soldiers' lives were aye his care ;
He knew the danger, and would succour send,
If not, for him, his Cause, they life would spend,
Nor count it sacrifice, if but he gain'd his end.

While still they toil, retreat the trumpets blow,
Not distant sounding from the plain below,
But cheerily the blast rings close at hand—
Their King has not forgot his gallant band.
While on the foe his stormers boldly rush'd,
Supports half up the hill Gustavus push'd ;
Already they entrenchments had begun,
And held the breastwork's line the stormers won.
There in the earth the Swedes could rest secure,
The hottest fusilade could well endure ;
While ev'n the hissing grape-shot's iron hail
Against the rampart nothing could avail ;
The line was tenable 'gainst each and all,
Impression nought could make but solid ball,
And even then a long-continued fire
From Friedland's hundred guns it would require,
And he might pound at it the livelong day,
With all his cannon on the rampart play,
Ere he could hope to waste his own breastwork away.

'Twas true his trenches rose, still tier on tier,
And Friedland on the top had nought to fear;
But yet this outer work a lodgment gave,
And did the stormers from destruction save:
Retreating in good order down below
They gain'd its shelter, while the exultant foe,
By victory's appearance there deceived,
With murderous fire of small arms was received;
Upon the entrench'd supports they headlong ran,
And fell at point-blank range, fast, man by man.
Behind the earthen breastwork's sheltering wall,
Out of the foremost line the stormers fall;
While they in safety there draw freer breath,
Another thousand warriors rush to death,—
To death, or, as they hope, to victory:
A sad, sad sight those gallant men to see,
To mark in flashing eyes bold spirits bounding free.

Scarce from the earthwork had they mounted higher
Ere the volcano belch'd again its fire;
Scarce on the hillside thinn'd away the smoke
Ere yet again the mountain's thunders broke;
While o'er its top yet hung the sulphurous cloud,
Roll'd down again a denser, thicker shroud.
Prone on their faces there the soldiers lay—
Soon would the iron tempest pass away,
Or soon at least its fury would be spent—
Fury, that from the boughs huge splinters rent,
The hillsides' rock to broken rubble plough'd.
The boldest veteran's daring courage cow'd,
For not a man could upright stand and live.
No sign of slackening does the death-rain give,
The deafening thunders roll without a break,
The mountain rocks to their foundations quake,

The smoke wreathes down still denser from above,
Fiercer the bullets hiss—they dare not move—
Were there a coward there he could not fly,—
Drench'd with their fellows' blood the living lie,
And clutch'd in dying grasp's convulsive agony.

Seconds to them seem hours, the minutes years,
As yet no rift in that dense cloud appears;
As yet the summit of the cloud-wrapt hill
Belches from gun to gun its lightnings still;
The grapeshot hails in deadlier, fiercer blast;
The wild tornado ages seems to last.
At length the hitherto incessant roar
Is scarcely so sustain'd as 'twas before,
And, though the bullets rain still fast and hot,
The ear distinguishes each cannon-shot;
Only at intervals at last they fire,
The furious cannonade the foe must tire:
For slowly now, like measured passing bell,
Distinct and clear booms out the cannon's knell.
Now is their time, at word of hoarse command
Uprise the remnants of the gallant band;
Ere yet the sulphurous shroud has time to lift,
And they appear within the smoke-cloud's rift,
Their decimated ranks they quickly form,
And press uphill once more in desperate storm.
Scant time the rising sulphur-pall allows,
The thorns they trample down, they climb the boughs;
Now through the smoke the inner ramparts loom,
Onward they rush, brave fellows, to their doom,
A rending volley's crash drowns the deep cannon's boom.

Slowly before the deadly musket fire
They fall back, and they scarce know how, retire.

Not theirs, indeed, the coward's headlong flight,
Though ground they yield, they still renew the fight;
Still with their faces to the hidden foe
A bold determined front they dauntless show;
Still cool and at their officers' command
Volley with volley to return they stand;
As down the hill they take their backward road,
They still deliberately their pieces load.
They started with high hopes, but not cast down
Their sheltering breastwork's parapet they crown;
To meet their Monarch there they do not fear,
Their comrades greet them with a ringing cheer;
Foil'd, yet as conquerors to triumph they appear.

In few brief words Gustavus them address'd :
"Brave Finlanders, in truth ye did your best,
Your fellowship this day I proudly claim,
No victory ever yielded higher fame;
Success your bravery could but repeat—
Devotion never could be more complete!"
Then to the troops the Monarch turn'd and said :
"Swedes, Swedish blood this day must needs be shed!
Life, as ye know, I would not throw away,
But Friedland we at least must hold at bay.
Too strong his lines may be to storm in front,
Yet must we cheerfully ev'n bear the brunt;
The Duke of Weimar will attack the rear,
I hope by night his friendly guns to hear
From yonder hill, which doth their camp command,—
Our onslaught then the foe can not withstand;
For Bernard, when the eminence is won,
Will silence with his batteries every gun!
Friedland's attention we must now distract,
In front he must believe he is attack'd :

Perchance we may succeed, by sudden rush,—
Within his triple lines our columns push,—
If not, with what is won we wait content,
Till Weimar's batteries' powerful aid is lent;
When once his balls upon the summit rain,
If not before, we then the victory gain!
Rudolph, to Fuerth, to my headquarters, go,
Our strong position on the hillside show.
There thou wilt doubtless Oxenstierna see,
Or Banner at the sign of the Green Tree.
Hear what my generals of the battle say;
On thy return take Bernard on thy way,
And bring me full report how with him goes the day."

Scarce had the Monarch finish'd his address
Than other veterans up the hillside press;
Again fresh columns for the onslaught form
And like their comrades brave the iron storm,
Within the smoke like them to sight are lost,
At last like them they too are backward forced:
More troops succeed, all day the fight goes on,
But not a foot more ground all day is won.
Six times the Swedes most gallantly attack,
Six times are driven to the breastwork back;
Undaunted still, they yet renew the fight,
In fiercer onset strain towards coming night,
And only cease at last when wholly fails the light.

Rudolph, according to the King's command,
Brought at the Green Tree first his steed to stand,
There at headquarters Oxenstierna found,
Heard how the varying battle raged around;
Here had the conquering Swedes advantage gain'd,
But there the foe the upper hand retain'd.

The Lutherans assault all down the line,
But false attacks deceive not Wallenstein;
School'd all his life in war, full well he knows
Where to expect his foeman's heaviest blows—
There, where is mass'd his whole artillery,
That hill to his position is the key,
And there he still remains in calm security.

From the headquarters by the nearest ford
Sped Rudolph on, where Bernard's cannon roar'd,
To the extreme left of the extended rank,
Where Hessian regiments Wallenstein's outflank.
Here raged a new and fierce-contested war,
For Friedland now the danger fully saw;
To amend his error, though too late, he tries,—
Upon this hill he had no batteries.
So steep its rocky sides, he never thought
Artillery to its summit could be brought;
And though he saw the Lutheran battering train
Wind its slow length below him in the plain,
Was confident of his position still,
Their cannon could not crown the opposing hill;
And from direct assault he felt secure,
As long as e'er he chose he could endure;—
Impregnable his lines, the foe's defeat was sure.

Careless, from sense of full security,
He had let slip his opportunity;
And Bernard's object partly was attain'd,
For now his batteries had the hillside gain'd;
Its summit Friedland could not occupy,
But to dislodge the foe he still could try.
Their movements gave him now to understand,
They hoped his strong position to command;

He saw no cause his error there to grieve,
Though clearly he the intention could perceive,
In its accomplishment he did not yet believe.

Yet since the Lutheran battle was not feign'd,
This new attack was not to be disdain'd :
Gustavus at the Lech had fully proved
His ponderous cannon could be smartly moved ;
No general yet had used throughout the war
Artillery with such effect before ;
He much improved this most important arm :
And Friedland had just cause for great alarm,
Should Bernard once erect his battery,—
And it was evident he meant to try.
Hence at this spot a furious contest raged,
And Weimar's troops are hotly now engaged ;
The Austrians hope they yet the hill may gain,
The Lutherans doggedly their posts maintain,
Under their leader's eye the utmost daring strain.

Into the thickening carnage Rudolph spurr'd,
Where Bernard's voice above the din was heard ;
Where his brave regiments in a serried line
Repel the fierce assaults of Wallenstein.
Elsewhere throughout the wide extended field
The Austrians assail'd their earthworks shield,
But here the contest on the extreme left flank
Is openly fought out in battle rank.
Elsewhere it is the Lutherans who attack,
The Austrians do no more than hold them back ;
But here the Austrians are the assailants found,
The Lutherans fight but to maintain their ground,—
With desperate battle-shouts the mountain's sides resound.

Somewhat advanced, Bernard of Weimar stood—
The Lutherans held the outskirts of a wood
That clothed with green the rugged mountain's base,
Behind which tower'd its steep and rocky face :
Already up the cliff's projecting wall
Their cannon like huge reptiles slowly crawl ;
A hundred men to every gun are tied,
Who drag it boldly up the mountain side.
So steep and narrow is the dizzy track,
The wheels are wedged, else would they all slip back :
Together on the ropes the soldiers strain,
And foot by foot climbs up the battering train.
They cannot reach the summit thus to-day,
Bernard below must hold the foe at bay,
By noon to-morrow they may reach the top,
Then Friedland in his lines no more can stop ;
The mountain both his hill and camp commands,
And this at last he plainly understands,
And hurls on Weimar's troops, with desperate force,
Regiment on regiment of his heavy horse,—
He must regain the hill, whatever be the loss.

To Bernard's side Rudolph in safety rode,
The King's position on the hillside show'd ;
How he the outer breastwork there had won,
Beyond that first success no more was done ;
Reported that the Monarch wish'd to know
With what good-speed the day with him did go.
Bernard replied that he had sent for aid,
Both to the King and Banner, sore afraid
Lest he must leave his guns ev'n where they stood,—
He needed every man to hold the wood ;
In any case, strive as the gunners might,
They could not gain the summit by the night.

Still, could they only keep the foe at bay,
To-morrow's noon would see their batteries play——
The Duke's reply is suddenly cut short,
A bullet to the ground his charger brought;
Rudolph dismounts—the staff haste up to aid—
A furious charge the hostile squadrons made;
The Duke was rescued—him they could not save,—
His death was such as well becomes the brave,
And Nuernberg's battlefield was Nuernberg's Hero's grave

Hemm'd in the horsemen's charging ranks between
A few short moments Rudolph there was seen,
Wielding his blade most manfully, at bay,
They could not cut to him their desperate way;
Themselves were by the Austrians backward borne,
Scarce was the Duke from 'neath his charger torn,
Ere they were forced around him all to close
To front the impetuous onset of their foes.
The charge repell'd, they won again the ground,
And Rudolph's lifeless body then was found,
Cover'd with wounds which yet were oozing gore.
His weapon proof of fierce resistance bore—
The blade was broken short above the hilt,
Which from his foemen's veins was crimson gilt,
Around him troopers lay whose blood its point had spilt.

They carried off his body to the rear
Upon four lances cross'd, a soldier's bier;
His bloodstain'd cloak upon his corse they spread,
Back to the battle-ranks then hurrying sped;
For every man was sorely needed there,
For dead or dying they no time could spare.
And such is war—the friend, the brother falls,
One parting hand-clasp—but the trumpet calls,

The battle-tumult tears the friend away,
Not at his brother's side may brother stay ;—
Not yet the time the comrade's fate to mourn ;—
Forward ! away by the fierce onrush borne
To redder carnage are survivors driven,
Yon serried ranks must be asunder riven ;—
Forward ! we must our grief awhile forego,
To-morrow shall indulge the victor's woe,—
Charge now, in vengeance charge, charge furious on the foe !

Upon this flank the conflict ebb'd and flow'd,
On Bernard's line the Austrians desperate rode ;
As charge on charge the Lutherans still repell'd,
The battle-tide in angrier tempest swell'd ;
But still the Hessian regiments held the wood,
Still gallantly the cavalry withstood.
Firm as the solid mountain's massive rock,
They brave the flooding horsemen's thunder shock :
In threatening storm the living billow nears,
To break upon that line of levell'd spears ;
Its force there spent, its ebbing waves retire,
Lash'd into fury by the withering fire,
Then at safe distance once again unite
In one huge roller, grand majestic sight,
And thunder on anew in proudly gathering might.

The morning pass'd, still Bernard holds his own,
His front with Austrian dead is thickly strown :
The sultry sun no longer blazes high,
But from the zenith fast falls through the sky ;
Some hours have sped since it was flaming noon
Gustavus surely will send succours soon.
Fiercer, more furious yet the onslaughts grew,
For Friedland's presence fires the foe anew ;

From troop to troop his foaming charger speeds
And reinforcement Bernard sorely needs :
Some time ago, though much against his will,
He summon'd all his gunners from the hill ;
And halfway up the mountain's rugged breast
His useless cannon, silent, idle rest :—
Ah ! will they ever crown its steep and rocky crest ?

While yet their ground the dauntless Hessians stood,
A cheering shout re-echoes through the wood,
And through the leaves already troops appear,—
'Tis Banner—and the King himself is near.
The Swedes relieve the hard-press'd Hessian line,
Content to hold in check fierce Wallenstein,
By taking up the ground the Hessians yield
Till Gustave comes in person on the field.
In vain the charge the Austrian trumpets blew,
In vain with thundering squadrons Friedland flew ;
On Banner's ranks no impress can he make,
No foot-breadth's stretch of ground the foe can take ;
In vain his troopers on the Swedes he flings.
Hark ! on the evening breeze the drum—the King's ;
Loud through the Lutheran ranks a shout of triumph rings.

Despairingly the Austrians now assault ;
Charge follows charge almost without a halt.
Unless they win the hill before the night
Gustavus will entrench his conquering might,
The mountain's summit at his leisure gain,
And place in battery his powerful train.
His error Friedland cannot now retrieve ;
Though reinforcements he too does receive,
In vain he hurls them on the stubborn foe,
The Lutherans will not victory forego :

In vain upon his troops once more he calls,
The Lutheran volleys rain on him their balls,
And, stricken to the heart, his charger 'neath him falls.

The sun went down upon the bloodstain'd plain ;
Both armies on the ground they hold remain :
The morrow will the conqueror doubtless show,
And Nuernberg rid of the beleaguering foe.
Out-generall'd, if not routed, Wallenstein
Will have to yield his close investing line :
The morrow will the Lutheran victory see,
In Nuernberg great rejoicings there will be.—
Man may by Genius triumph over Man,
But Nature often overrides his plan ;
And Circumstance beyond his weak control
Frustrates the schemes on which he sets his soul,
And in the dust is apt his air-built towers to roll.

If, as too oft, those schemes are underhand,
Base and intriguing, we could understand
The Powers of Nature, Circumstance, and Fate,
Should be allow'd the scoundrel to frustrate ;
Heaven all its weapons would, we think, combine
Against a tyrant such as Wallenstein.
But no,—the wicked man we often see
Flourishing even as the green bay-tree,
And while the righteous suffers much distress,
His path runs smoothly on to full success.
Friedland, it seem'd, could Nature's self control,
As though he had, as men said, sold his soul,
A compact with the Prince of Darkness made,
By which he could, when of himself afraid,
Ev'n summon Hell at will his failing schemes to aid.

Omnipotence! Oh, Heaven-claim'd Attribute—
Alas! for Eve and her forbidden fruit!
That apple,—cause of direst misery,
Of sin and death,—it tasting, can it be
That our first parents in that evil hour
Not only gave themselves to Satan's power,
Made millions then unborn the prey of Hell,
But banish'd God from His own earth as well?
Since Good Omnipotent can not with Evil dwell.

Alas! alas! It must be even so!
Evil is ever present here we know;
We mourn its baneful influence every day,
Ev'n things inanimate all own its sway:—
Good—that is God—is banish'd from the world,
Or from His throne Omnipotence is hurl'd!
But Good, though powerless oft, hath some control;
Man feels its promptings still within his soul;
For no one is to Evil wholly given,
All, ev'n the worst, have with the Devil striven.
Here Good and Evil hold divided sway,
Till earth and time shall pass at length away.
For Good is not omnipotent on earth,
To Evil Man is prone ev'n from his birth;
Good once was not Omnipotent in Heaven,
The Devil once had even power to leaven
With Evil those blest realms beyond the sky,
And raise rebellion against God Most High;
But as it is in Heaven, so too will be,
When Man the earth again restored shall see,
Good—God Omnipotent through all Eternity!

And Good Omnipotent—Oh! joyful thought!—
Thereby all men's salvation may be wrought!

Ev'n theirs who Christ's atonement here reject
Whose sinking Faith on Reason's rock is wreck'd ;
And even theirs who from sheer love of sin
Repress the promptings of the Good within ;
All men's—ev'n theirs who here their God deny,
Who hold their souls will with their bodies die,
And scornfully reject an Immortality.

Omnipotent !—Who can the outcome tell ?
What then becomes of Satan and of Hell ?
When souls of men he may no more torment,
Since the most wicked now their term have spent ;
When fitted Heaven's eternal joys to know,
The last damn'd soul escapes his realms of woe,
Purged now by fire from its foul evil fold
Its remnant Good shines forth like grain of gold,
The merest speck, but still the metal pure,
Refined at last by Suffering's torment-cure ;
If wholly evil he must pass away,
Not ev'n in Hell may Satan more hold sway :
Both God destroys in mercy, not in hate,—
Good cannot Evil ever tolerate,
And, when Omnipotent, must it annihilate !

But some there are, we know, who dare to think—
From such deep mysteries we humbly shrink—
That if in Satan there be aught of Good,
Ev'n he, who once in arms his God withstood,
Who from his Maker's image Man debased,
Almost His likeness from Man's soul effaced,
Will, last of all, be to repentance won
Through the long cycles' still eternal run,—
Who hold, if there of Good in him be aught,
On Satan Hell's fierce tortures will be wrought,
Until from it is purged all Evil's trace,

And he may then behold his Sovereign's face,
Thankful to enter Heaven, though in the lowest place.

Good is, will be, Omnipotent in Heaven,
But on this earth to Evil power is given—
The power,—we see it, feel it every day,
The Devil here ev'n more than God holds sway.
Men cling to Evil with their failing breath,
But turn to God at last on bed of death;
Succeed in life by leaning on two stools,
They trust in God ev'n while the Devil rules.
The wicked flourish as the green bay-tree—
Satan their friend—their foe God cannot be;
God who created Man knows Man is weak,
Against His creatures vengeance cannot seek;
While Satan, still to keep the upper hand,
Must render service to his friends' command.
Here to the wicked life may thus be smooth,
With Satan aye at hand its ills to soothe;
Health, wealth, and happiness their portion here,
Long life and easy death, no doubts, no fear,—
Their lot, were this life all, would enviable appear.

The Good, though God to them indeed is Friend,
On earth contented life can never spend,
Since Satan is the good man's deadly foe,
And Evil overpowers the Good below.
Ever, though conscious still of rectitude,
Upon his holiest moments sins intrude;
Sickness, disease, and poverty his lot,
For scarcely wealth by goodness can be got;
The world in which he lives allures to sin,
Wars fallen nature with the Good within:
His soul is fix'd upon Ideal high;

And yet it seems but vain, but vain to try,
To aspirations pure foul actions give the lie.
No wonder, then, since Man may choose between,
On Evil's side the numbers aye are seen ;
Since there they gain a friend and make no foe,
Evil an easy, happy life can show :
The future they at present leave alone,
Repentance will they trust for sin atone ;
Faith without Works is still their easy creed ;
Their Saviour on their death-bed first they'll need.
Meanwhile, the world they may at best enjoy,
In Evil's ways their health, their wealth, employ ;
To heaven their thoughts can turn when sinful pleasures cloy.

Fools, fools !—they little think for fleeting gain
They needs must suffer countless years of pain ;
Shut out from bliss through all those weary years,
Their penalty vain sighs, regretful tears.
Evil, not in its false, alluring show,
But in its hideous nakedness they know ;
Which very knowledge must be purged away
Ere they are fitted for Heaven's glorious day.
Yet all their suffering will not be in vain,
Since thus at last to Heaven they will attain :
Though countless years have pass'd in utter woe,
Unending joys for them Heaven still can show,
Eternity has still an undiminish'd flow !

These are the vast majority, but souls
There are whom Evil almost all controls,
A few like Wallenstein, of whom men say,
With horror, they have taken Satan's pay,—
Men who in Heaven had God with him defied,
Had ranged themselves ev'n there on Satan's side.

Awful the torments they must undergo—
It well may seem Eternity of woe,
Ever and ever! Language cannot tell,
Fails to describe their long-enduring Hell!
Ages on ages will effect no cure,
Their torments they will wrathfully endure;
Ages must pass ere they will even know
That Good will be the outcome of their woe;
The truth 'twill take them ages to attain,
That Good will everywhere triumphant reign;
Ages by millions must be multiplied
Ere yet their souls depraved, by suffering tried,
Show forth the grain of Good which they with Evil hide.

These are the Despots, Tyrants of the earth,
Who cherish but their own exalted worth,—
Priests, Conquerors, Statesmen, by whatever name
The mighty lordship o'er their fellows claim—
And with the haughtiest monarchs, side by side,
The paltriest, vilest knaves are close allied,—
All who, by low, mean arts, on men impose,
With Priests and Kings, Religion's, Freedom's foes.
Evil is measured not by dazzling crimes
Whose traces live throughout all after-times,
But by the sordid selfishness of soul
Which love of Good in no way can control;
The opportunity is not the sin,
'Tis foul desire that lurks the heart within!
And which is worse, the lowborn, blackleg cheat,
His law-train'd mind in villainy complete,
Or blue-blood conqueror, law trampling 'neath his feet.

Were Man not of God's image, one would say
Within such selfish souls Good held no sway;

The Breath of Life from Man's Creator came,
Evil may hide, but cannot quench the flame;
It still must shine, though feebly, dimly dark,
At last triumphant must burst forth the spark.
Believe not then an everlasting doom,
For Good will Evil surely overcome,
And fix through boundless space eternally its home!

But since this World the Devil clearly rules,
He needs such knaves—they are his willing tools;
There even may be truth in what men tell
That such as Wallenstein their souls can sell!
Though Good within they cannot quite destroy,
They do their utmost in his fell employ;
Wealth, power, success, he promises, as pay,
And difficulties smooths through life away.
If we but note this Wallenstein's career,
From boyhood to his death by hireling's spear,
Its possibility throughout may well appear.

When set on battle-plain the burning sun,
The Swedish Monarch had the advantage won;
But when next morn again he flaming rose
The odds were turn'd in favour of his foes.
A heavy storm of rain fell in the night,
And morning dawn'd upon a wondrous sight:
Dripping and sodden was the boggy wood,
And half-way up, where Bernard's cannon stood,
Water in streams pour'd down the rocky hill,
But elsewhere all was dry, parch'd, thirsty still;
Cloudless and bright the brassy morning sky,
Across its wide expanse no vapours fly;
The case was plain, admitted not of doubt,
Upon the hill had burst a waterspout;

Greasy and slippery is the mountain side,
In vain to haul their guns the Lutherans tried.
The soldiers on the cannons' drag-ropes strain,
Hopeless the summit ever to attain,
Upon the miry rock no foothold can they gain.

Nature, when all was lost, had lent her aid
On Friedland's side, and a diversion made ;
He had prepared already over night
To evacuate his camp with morning light,
And, ere the Lutheran cannon opening roar,
To draw back from the more than doubtful war,
Retire while he might orderly retreat,
Ere failure show'd in palpable defeat.
But when he saw how miry was the soil,
The cannon motionless with all their toil,
The soldiers straining with a desperate will,
But not advancing up the slippery hill,
Too pleased his orders thus to countermand,
He bade his regiments in their trenches stand ;
No more they need to think of falling back,
Gustavus now would scarce again attack.
And so it proved, the Swedish trumpets sound—
Impossible the hill the gunners found,
But easy task enough to reach the lower ground.

Slowly the Lutherans from the field retire,
Under the cover of their batteries' fire,
Which thunder, sullen, from the Rednitz' banks
As sore cast down march back the silent ranks.
No longer in the veterans' flashing eye
Gleams battle-joy, nor martial ardour high ;
No longer in the soldiers' port and mien,
And bearing proud, the bounding heart is seen ;

The lip compress'd, the stern set glance of fire,
Betray the intensity of wrathful ire,
And in the savage gloom of fierce despair
Gleams the wild fury of the tiger's glare.
Well is it for the lurking, beaten foe,
That in the plain he does not dare to show,
For victory not again these warriors would forego!

It needed all their Monarch's tact and skill
To lead them down from Friedland's bloodstain'd hill,
Else, baffled there, by desperation crush'd,
Upon the Austrian earthworks they had rush'd;
And where their comrades had their life-blood shed,
Theirs too had stain'd the hill a deeper red.
And all in vain—not ev'n a hope forlorn—
Their ranks the grape-shot into shreds had torn;
Upon that hillside they could only die,
Alone could not achieve the victory.
His troops Gustavus would not throw away—
Though death had mark'd those gallant men his prey,
Not this the desperate field, nor this the fatal day!

Friedland, secure upon his mountain's crest,
Did not attempt their march down to molest;
Beyond a shot or two, at random fired,
He held his might within his lines retired.
Too near had he himself been to defeat
Now to oppose their sullen, slow retreat;
Too well he knew that in the open plain
He could not hope a victory to gain;
And he was but too glad, the truth to tell,
That after all he had escaped so well.
The victory now he would unblushing claim,
And Nuernberg should add lustre to his name,
While Sweden's laurel wreath would wither with his fame.

By night the whole of Gustave's, Bernard's force,
Was safely brought the Rednitz stream across,
And, muster call'd within the camp, they found
Two thousand dead were left upon the ground;
And 'twas but sorry comfort that they knew
Friedland had also greatly suffer'd too,
The enemy had not them backward forced;
The battle won was but through Nature lost.
Ere long another field would doubtless show
That they could triumph still o'er every foe;
Against them Nature twice scarce obstacles would throw.

I draw a veil o'er the heartrending scene,
The agonies that, grief and joy between,
Her streaming eyes with tender light suffuse
When Eric breaks to Hilda his sad news;
For, next to Eric, Rudolph was most dear,
And for them both she ever went in fear:
And Rudolph's fall renew'd again the smart
Her father's death had planted in her heart.
Yet joy that she had not ev'n lost them both,
Brother, and him to whom she gave her troth,
Temper'd the maiden's deeply-welling grief,
And to her sorrow gave indeed relief;
Which the next moment swell'd in greater dread
Lest she should mourn ere long him also dead.
Such torture well-nigh desperation wrought,
Almost her reason left her with the thought;
On Eric's neck she weeping, trembling hung,
Upon his breast in sobbing anguish clung,
Her mind, her inmost soul, with misery unstrung.

After this fight two weeks still pass'd away,
Within their lines both armies waiting lay;

Austrians and Swedes now equal suffering saw,
And neither could as yet with fame withdraw :
But Gustave's noble spirit deem'd it shame
Nuernberg should suffer to enhance his fame ;
His troops in greater numbers daily die,
And he must end this fell uncertainty.
Though Friedland's camp he could not hope to storm,
His army need no longer cover form ;
To hold the place a strong force should he leave,
His absence dread of famine would relieve :
Nor would he Nuernberg even thus forsake,
On Friedland's flank he could position take ;
At Windsheim, well provision'd, he would stay
Till Friedland drew at length his troops away,
Or, should he dare in folly storm to try,
To Nuernberg's succour thence could promptly fly,
And under Nuernberg's walls would gain the victory.

Thus once again the Lutheran array
Marches from out its lines at break of day :
Again, a stern, determined battle-force,
The Rednitz at the fords they boldly cross ;
But Friedland keeps his troops their works behind,
Although before his camp they slowly wind.
The morning air by thunders is not rent,
No storm of grape upon their ranks is sent ;
He does not fire a single cannon-ball,
Upon their march his horsemen do not fall :
And now, as ever, in the open plain
The Swedes may show a battle front in vain,
The Austrians on the hills, fenced in the earth, remain.

But hardly was Gustavus out of sight
Than Friedland hasten'd to withdraw his might ;

His honour saved, he need no longer stay,
He now could vaunt he forced the King away :
Although as yet he nothing there had done,
He held his lines, and thus the victory won ;
And though he sacrificed full half his host,
For more than thirty thousand men he lost,
Yet such was Gustave's name, he still had cause to boast.

Early one morn, as gray the dawning broke,
Rose on the distant hills thick clouds of smoke,
And, as the sun mounts o'er the horizon higher,
Nuernberg could see his camp was set on fire ;
And from the outposts soon the scouts brought word
Friedland along the line withdrew his horde.
At first the burghers to the ramparts ran,
In anxious haste the battlements to man ;
But when the smoke from off the hillsides clear'd,
And yet no sign of storming foes appear'd,
And no assault upon their lines was made,
The city was no longer then afraid,
But realised at last he raised the long blockade.

Out on the sultry air the joy-bells clash'd,
Salvoes on salvoes from the ramparts crash'd ;
The men's loud shouts rang upwards to the skies,
And tears of gladness brimm'd the women's eyes ;
The children burst out into joyous song,
And Nuernberg's streets and lanes all quickly throng.
Out of the gates they pour, a living tide,
Eager to roam the country far and wide :
Though the sad signs of war are everywhere,
They can at least breathe draughts of purer air ;
Although the plague-taint outside, too, holds sway,
Their lungs expanding can at least have play.

Familiar they have grown long since with death,
The city reeks with pestilential breath ;
Within the town in crowded prison pent,
In dog-day heat the long weeks they have spent ;
Nothing to them outside can worse appear,
The plague inside they have more cause to fear,
Within those circling walls Death still seems ever near.

Some seek in distant woods cool, grateful shade,
The well-known nooks where they in childhood play'd ;
Some in the silver Rednitz' sparkling wave
Their limbs, like truant schoolboys, splashing lave ;
Stretch'd on the ground, full length, some choose to lie,
Beneath the oak's umbrageous canopy,
And with a lazy freedom are content,
The live-long day in calm enjoyment spent ;
While some their steps, the more adventurous, turn
Where Friedland's works still on the hillside burn :
These, fully arm'd, the country round explore,
The hillside where most furious raged the war,
And cautiously, as though they ambush dread,
About the smouldering lines they anxious tread,
Haply a friend to find among the unburied dead.

But ambush there no need at all to fear,
The camp was quite deserted it was clear ;
And when they climb'd the summit of the hill,
The line of march they even traced out still ;
For from the country, looking to the north,
Where villages erst stood, now flames burst forth :
Columns of smoke shot up into the sky
Call'd Heaven to witness Friedland's cruelty,
All the broad vale through which the Rednitz flow'd
A blacken'd track of desolation show'd,
Where his retreating force to Forcheim took the road.

Well might the madly pealing joybells ring,
As though from out the belfries they would swing;
Well might the burghers shout, the women weep
For joy, for joy the happy children leap;
Of Magdeburg's dread fate they all had heard,
The self-same fate for them had been prepared,
And Nuernberg's spires had crash'd in thunder down
Had Friedland's soldiers ever gain'd the town.
The flames that mark'd their road towards the north
Were kindled there in disappointed wrath;
Balk'd of the city's spoil, their promised prey,
They ravaged everywhere upon their way.
The fate the town escaped, alas! befell
The countrymen, who must defenceless dwell;
His savage soldiers turn'd that valley into Hell.

Gustavus march'd at once from Windsheim forth,
As Friedland drew away towards the north,
But his retreat he could not intercept;
And since the country round his troops had swept,
He could not hope to overtake the foe,
The wasted lands could no provision show.
His army he divides in two commands,—
Bernard of Weimar in Franconia stands,
The Rhineland and the Lutheran North to guard,
A second siege from Nuernberg thus to ward;
He to Vienna turns again his course,
Hoping to draw on thither Friedland's force.
Before him Austria all defenceless lay,
Friedland must follow if he went that way;
Then in the open field his Swedes would gain the day.

But traitorous Friedland had no such intent,
To succour Ferdinand he never meant;

Let Gustave but his Lutheran ends pursue,
He thereby will accomplish Friedland's too.
So still he took the safer northward course,—
His army too had suffer'd fearful loss ;
In Saxony its strength it would recruit,
Where Arnheim scarcely would the field dispute.
In winter quarters he secure would wait,
Feast his foul soul, and revel, in his hate,
O'er Maximilian's need, and Austria's fenceless state.

At Bamberg now again he held review ;
Where Maximilian, duped, his troops withdrew,
And march'd Bavaria's borders to defend,
Since thus the campaign Friedland chose to end ;
His counsels ever had been overruled,
He now saw clearly he had been befooled ;
Friedland all through had meant to draw away
And leave his lands to Sweden's troops a prey :
The long blockade had served excuse for sheer delay.

Three months ago, had pass'd before him then
In proud review some sixty thousand men ;
Friedland, elated at the sight, cried out
The next four days should victory bring about,—
Victory that would to all the nations show,
As soon as ere he chose to strike the blow,
Who arbiter of all the world would be,—
Meaning of course the conqueror, even he.
But still that battle was not yet begun,
Much less decisive, world-wide victory won.
Again review of all his might he holds,
The remnant of his vast array beholds ;
And now the regiments their march-past begin,
And Maximilian's forces counting in,
But four-and-twenty thousand men they boast,
Much less than half of his embattled host ;
The rest by famine, plague, desertion, war, were lost.



BOOK XI.

The Death of Gustavus at Fuetzen.

DREAMS—what are they ?—When past the midnight watch,
In the still, silent hours before the dawn,
Ere yet the earliest streak has tinged the sky,
Ere wakes the peasant to his round of toil,—
For not as yet in lusty clarion call
The rooster's crow, repeated oft and oft,
Has roused him from his well-earn'd, grateful rest,—
Not yet the impatient sparrow in the thatch
Has from beneath its wing untuck'd its head,
And twitter'd forth its greeting to its mate,
Chirping good-morrow with its wonted glee ;
While Nature yet is wrapt in deep repose,
The flowers still sleeping hang their folded heads,
Their leaves unstirr'd by softly whispering breeze,
The air itself being motionless and still :—
Then in the silent hours the soul of Man
Awakens, though his senses slumber on.
His mind is not his own, for absent will
No longer checks his thoughts, which ramble now
Controll'd by nought, unless by powers that are
Beyond the knowledge of a doubting world.

But Man, enlighten'd by his vain conceit,
Has grown so wise that he can no more hold
The simple faith which once sufficed his sires,
That Heaven vouchsafed in visions of the night
Its hidden purposes to Man to show,
And thus to him his future weal declare,
Or warn him of impending direful fate.

Our earlier sires had never ask'd the cause
Of dreams, but they were ignorant, we say,
And sought not to unravel mysteries ;
They were content to still receive as truth
The ancient lore which, through the ages told
By father to the son, in childhood they
Had heard with wonder round the blazing fire ;
And when to manhood grown they shaped their course
Through life, deciding nations' destinies,
As they interpreted their nightly dreams,
Not doubting that the visions they had seen
In sleep were sent by Heaven to light their lives.

But though men now no more allow that dreams
Are in their essence supernatural ;
Though, question'd, they would doubtless still deny
That they in warning visions aught believe ;
Yet there are few who have not in their day
Been frighten'd, influenced even, by a dream,—
Howe'er they may have striven, have even found
They could not shake its terrors from the mind,
And, rather than incur the dreaded ill,
Have chosen their set purpose to forego.
While some there are who brave the ridicule
To which by the confession they're exposed,
And boldly say they still believe by dreams

Heaven's warnings may be yet, as once, convey'd :
For to themselves in dreams has been declared
Impending danger, which they, thus forewarn'd,
Have by that knowledge only just escaped.

When times are peaceful, and the daily round
Runs smoothly onward in its wonted groove,
Imagination, blunted then by ease,
Has no occasion to assert its power ;
The warning visions pass unheeded by,
The wakening mind is wrapt in present joys,
And dwells not on the vague and ill-defined.
But when the times are troublous, when life hangs
From day to day as 'twere upon a thread,
When dangers gather hourly, and when death
Intrudes his dreaded shape yet nearer still,
The mind unhinged is easily disturb'd :
Then outlined shadows of a restless night
Take forms substantial, rounded, in the day,
And nightly terrors haunt our waking thoughts,
And these again upon our dreams react ;
The dread of ill impending, for ourselves,
Or what is worse, of ill to those we love :
Until at last the balance of the mind
Is lost, and we no more discriminate
Betwixt the danger and the awful dread,
And in our nerveless fear are hurried on
To actions we must afterward repent.

What wonder, then, that gentle Elinore—
Who through the long campaign had bravely nerved
Her soul, and hidden from her lord the King
The anxious fears she ever felt for him ;
Who all the summer long in absence pined,

Dreading the worst throughout the long-drawn siege—
Should break down utterly now Gustave spoke
Of carrying on in winter still the war,
Of pushing on to meet this Wallenstein,
Whom—so her fond heart told her,—for her lord,
Of all his foes, she had most cause to dread.
Love has a thousand eyes, and woman's love,
The wife's, the mother's, thousand thousand more,
To see the dangers that the loved one scorns.
Her love is gifted with a second sight,—
A sense that only loyal women know,
In which self hath no part, in what concerns
Husband or children only has it power ;
Foreign to reason, it in argument
May too oft fail, but yet instinctively
It knows its counsel sounder than it seems.
And such was Elinore's,—but ah—alas!—
It could not from his purpose turn the King,
Duty he followed still, whate'er might hap ;
Though much he loved her, nought avail'd her tears.

Although the road to Austria open lay,
And few short weeks had placed within his power
Vienna, and had given preponderance
In Europe to his conquering Swedish arms,
Yet had he once again when near his goal
Retraced his steps to succour an ally—
Not one like Nuernberg wholly to his cause
Devoted, faithful from the first, ere yet
His dazzling victories had his genius proved ;
But one who came half-hearted to the Cause,
Who sought his own advantage in the war,
Lutheran in name alone and policy,
Who later, proving traitor to the Swedes,
Made peace with Austria to their detriment.

Though Gustave knew him unreliable,
Yet was he an ally and now in need,
And that was reason all sufficient why
The Monarch should awhile again forego
His triumph, and the fruits of victory.
Friedland had march'd his forces northward still,
And meant to winter in the Saxon lands,
For thus he best his traitorous ends could serve;
And for the second time the Elector John
Upon Gustavus call'd to turn and help.
For Austrian squadrons from his force detach'd,
Under von Holk and Gallas, wasted now
With fire and sword the Saxon provinces;
And Friedland followed at his army's head,
And burnt the farmsteads, hamlets as he pass'd,
Pull'd down the Lutheran churches to the ground,
Destroy'd the crops, as had been aye his wont,
And gave his soldiers leave to pillage, rob,
And even murder peasants at their will;
Leipzig surrender'd on his threatening her,
Should she resist, with Magdeburg's dread fate;
And he was pushing on to Dresden now,
Which town the Elector's forces strove to save,
When of Gustavus' fast approach he heard.
Drawing his scatter'd bands together then,
Recalling Pappenheim to his command,
He took position to await the King,
Determined, though it should ev'n cost him dear,
As winter-quarters Saxony to hold;
Relying much upon his greater force,
But more upon his star auspicious now,
And Seni's sure prediction that the King
Would meet with dire misfortune in the field—
Sweden, the heavens declared, had cause to dread
The coming month, November, for her King.

Gustavus now had Arnstadt reach'd, and there
Bernard of Weimar join'd him with his force :
And thus the armies muster'd when combined
Some twenty thousand old and veteran troops.
At Erfurt to his Queen he bade farewell,
Fondly, but firmly, as a hero should ;
But even then at the last moment there
The wife, the woman strove him yet to turn
From his fix'd purpose, in her loving fear.
"Gustave," she said, her brimming eyes flow'd o'er,
As on his breast she sunk in deep distress,
"Gustave, thou must my woman's weakness now
Forgive—in vain I strive to hide my tears,—
They will no more be check'd, but well as though
My heart with grief were e'en already broke,
As it will be should evil thee betide ;
And much my soul misgives me for thy sake.
"Oh ! be advised ere yet it be too late ;
Allow me, Gustave, but this once to sway
Thy mind, and turn thee from this desperate course.
Never, thou knowest, have I interfered
Before—nor, though I trembled oft for thee,
Knowing thy spirit's dauntless bravery,
And all the risks to which on battle-day
It is thy wont thyself to expose, have I
Betray'd my fears to thee till now, but with
A desperate energy and loyal love
Have hid from even thee my anxious dread ;—
Nerving my woman's soul to manlike part,
Within my bosom press'd the flooding tears,
To bid thee hitherto a brave farewell ;
And not till in my closet left alone
Allow'd I ere before my tears their vent.
But, love, I know not why, I dread indeed
This Wallenstein—my instinct tells me he—

He is our bane. Would that I could persuade
Thee on thy laurels now to rest awhile,
And not to risk this year another fight.
Oh! Gustave, Gustave, as I part from thee,
I feel it is for ever that we part!"

"My Elinore, mine own true-hearted wife,"
Replied the King, "thy love for me in truth
Hath warp'd thy better judgment, is't not so?
And conjured up within thy troubled brain
Strange fantasies and visions of mischance,—
Anxiety on my behalf throughout
The three months' long-protracted Nuernberg siege.
Since absent thou couldst not my danger share,
That danger to thy mind hath magnified,
And taken stronger grasp upon thy soul
Than, love, befits a soldier's wife. Is this
The self-same Elinore who sobbing hangs
Upon my neck,—the same who bravely led
Across the Baltic succours to her lord;
And chose to share the hardships of the camp,
Preferring war's alarms to queenly ease?
Nay, wife, bear up, and dread for me no ill.
Until the time appointed for my death
Thy husband, Elinore, is safe; and when
That time shall come ev'n love can nought avail!
Why, then, meet sorrow half-way on the road?
If I must fall a victor on the field,
It is at least the death I would desire,
And easier far than lingering end of pain.
I shall not die until my work is done!
Nor is the battle-day so deadly that
A soldier need avoid a righteous field.
It was not Wallenstein, but pestilence
And famine we had greater cause to dread;

And, having now escaped the greater ill,
The lesser we no reason have to fear."

"Husband, I know I'm weak, but argument
Appeals to reason, not to woman's heart—
'Tis powerless against terrors such as mine!
And since I must, I will confess, for nought
I could advance would weigh with thee, to turn
Thee from the dangerous path where duty leads.
Mine are not idle fears, not such as rise
From solitude or sense of loneliness,
Nor even such as loved one's absence breeds
In woman's breast, when dangers him surround.
Such have I felt, in common with my sex;
But, as thou sayest, these a soldier's wife
Must learn to bear; and, Gustave, I have learn'd!
Such fears may in thine absence cloud my soul,
But, love, thy presence doth their gloom dispel
At once, e'en as the rising summer sun
Disperses from the earth the mists of night.
But these are terrors such as will not yield—
Nor find I even in thy fond embrace,
Nor in thy loving words, more comfort now!—
Gustave, I dream'd a horrid, awful dream,
Portentous and betokening surely ill.
I dream'd the battle-ranks were set, and thou
And Friedland at the opposing armies' head,
Which waited but the signal to engage;
When, as I gazed, behold! the gaping earth
Open'd in fissure, and from out the rent
Myriads of demons issued forth in flame,
And took their stations against thee array'd!—
And in a moment all was thick obscured
In midnight darkness, black as blackest Hell,

Out which a din and clash of arms arose,
And direr thunders than of human war.
Then in my dream I was transported high
Beyond the furthest stars, until the din
Died slowly in the distance, and instead
The sweetest harmonies entranced the ear,
And the black darkness changed to lustrous light
Refracted in the richest rainbow hues,
So dazzling that my mortal, earthly eyes
Were well-nigh blinded by the glorious blaze—
Glory indefinite, but glory still.
I heard a voice— 'Lord, upon earth,' it cried
In herald tones of trumpet ringing clear,
'The powers of Hell in battle now engage,
Siding with him who else were powerless
Against thy chosen champion in the field:
Suffer us, Lord, to lend him helping aid
Ere he is by the devils overborne!'
'Ye shall not go to aid nor interfere!'
Them answer'd God in thunder-swelling words,
And the wide space of Heaven to the utmost bound
Reverberated as the Almighty spake;
'Have I not said the earth is given o'er
To Evil—that the Devil work his will?
The earth is his, should ye contest his will
The triumph gain'd in Heaven might be reversed!
Here ye were victors—there I will not say
The devils would not angels overmatch,
Since Evil more than Good has there the power.
And if I raise 'mong men in every age
Champions who may set limits to its sway,
That Good shall not be wholly trampled out
Among mankind, whom I created Mine,—
Not on the earth is their reward, nor there
Can they expect to triumph in My Cause.'

Gustave!—oh, must I still go on?—Is not
The vision thus far told sufficient now
To turn thy purpose, leastwise for a while?
Dost thou not share with me a sense of dread,
Foreboding ill? within thy secret soul
Art thou as erst assured of victory?
Is Friedland nothing more than mortal foe?
Alas! I read within thy loving eye
Pity for my distress, and nought beyond:
The terrors of my vision move not thee!—
And must I, husband, e'en the rest disclose?"
"Love, as thou wilt—a dream is but a dream,
Result maybe of anxious thought prolong'd
In some mysterious manner by the brain,
That sleeps not wholly with our sleeping mind.
I do not build on dreams, nor do I yet
Deny a dream may be inspired or sent
By Heaven, as ev'n our waking thoughts may be.
Tell me the whole, if it will ease thy mind,
And let me be the interpreter to thee!"

"Oh! Gustave, Gustave,—scarcely can I speak
The rest, but if I tell thee, and it serve
To change thy mind, the vision will not be,
Believe me, sent in vain.—The scene was changed,
And now again upon the earth I stood—
Upon the still and silent battle-field,
And it was night, the moon obscured by cloud;
But suddenly, e'en while I anxious gazed
Around to see what signs of victory—or
Defeat, I dreaded—the lone plain might yield,
The cloud-veil parted, and the moon burst out,
Lighting the ghastly scene for miles around:—
Lo! at my feet an upturn'd, pale, white face—
And, Gustave, it was thine."—Here flooding tears

Choked all her utterance, round her husband's neck
She clung, nor strove her grief more to control ;
Nor did the Monarch seek to soothe her fears
But, silent, suffer'd her awhile to weep,
Until the tempest somewhat spent its force ;
Then, as he gently raised her face, he said :
" And were it, Elinore, the Almighty's Will
That I should fall in this my next campaign,
Thou shouldst not, wife, give way thus to despair.
But this is but a dream ! thy mind hath dwelt
Too much upon a chance word I let fall,
That Friedland seem'd to be ev'n one of those
Who for this life's success would barter all
Their future hopes, or, as the people say,
Would sell their souls : and this chance word, combined
With my express'd presentiment that I
At last upon the field of victory
Shall fall, hath form'd the groundwork of thy dream.
I have my dreams too, and they contradict
The interpretation thou hast set upon
This one of thine—I dream of easy march
Upon Vienna, and of glorious peace
Wrung from the Kaiser in his Kaiserburg !—
Peace, that to all these suffering lands shall give
Security to worship God as He
Hath shown He would be worshipp'd in His Word ;—
Peace, that shall burst for ever Priestcraft's bonds
For all who are not willingly Rome's slaves !
Now, since our dreams thus differ, how can both,
Love, be fulfill'd ; and since one needs must be
Delusive, false, why should it not be thine ?
For, if I am to fall in this campaign,
How can I reach the Kaiser's capital,
And there make for the Lutheran peoples peace
Which only can our liberties secure ?

Then bear up, sweetheart, and dismiss thy fears,
Life is too short to mourn foreboded ills!
Bid me 'Godspeed!' then, with thy brave farewell,
And be again my Elinore of yore.
There, love, the smiles already chase thy tears;
Believe me, we shall shortly meet again!"

Thus sought the husband still to cheer the wife,
And in some part succeeded ere he went
Forth to the battle which would be his last.
While he was present yet, her woman's heart
Found comfort in his confidence, and felt
The heavy weight was lifted from her soul.
For while he stood before her in the pride
Of manhood, while she gazed into his eyes,
Which beam'd with tenderness and genius' fire,
And felt his warm embrace around her close,
As lovingly he kiss'd away her tears;
How could she else but from his lips receive
The assurance that for him she need not fear,
His work was not accomplish'd, and he felt
He would not fall until, his mission done,
His Master he could better serve above?
But when he now was gone, and she alone
Was left to combat with recurring fear,
The horrors of her vision soon return'd,
And held her spirit with redoubled force;
Nor could sweet Hilda's presence aught avail,
Nor yet the Lady Alma's soothing tones—
(For when the siege of Nuernberg Friedland raised
The King had placed, for change of air and scene
Both ladies in his gentle Consort's suite),—
Though they could sympathise with minds distress'd,
Knowing themselves bereavement's bitter sting;
And Hilda with the Queen had common cause



"Bid me 'Godspeed!' then, with thy brave farewell,
And be again my Elinore of yore."

[To face page 428.]

To dread the coming campaign for her love :
For well she knew that, should Gustavus fall,
Eric would share his much-loved Sovereign's fate.
At Erfurt there were heavy, heavy hearts,
And weeping eyes, as now the forces march—
For what can women do but weep and pray?
And theirs the harder lot to wait and weep,
To pray and weep, and weep and pray in turn,
Feeling the while that all will be in vain,
And neither prayer nor weeping will avail.

The King gain'd Naumburg ere the squadrons sent
By Friedland could the fortress overpower,
And was with joy unspeakable received.
Into the town from all the country round
The people hurried, longing once to gaze
Their fill upon the saviour of their faith.
Here, but a year ago, at Breitenfeld,
He fought the battle that had overthrown
The veteran Tilly, who was deem'd till then
Invincible; that battle had destroy'd
In one short day the fruits of victories
A life-long gain'd on many a hard-fought field.
And now he was array'd again to meet
Another leader of as great a fame
As Tilly's, although not so well deserved;
The one had shown a warlike genius oft,
The other claim'd it, and his name and power
Pass'd current hitherto for generalship,
And favouring Fortune had made good his claim;
But soon the time would come when he must meet
Tilly's great victor in the field, and prove
Whether or not he could there hold his own.
But not for long the people were content
To merely gaze upon the Hero-king:

Rending the air with acclamations loud,
They threw themselves before him on their knees,
Till almost they with worship welcomed him;
And those who could but touch his mantle's hem,
The housing of his war-steed, or his sword,
Were overjoy'd and ever boasted it.
Gustavus, though he could not else but feel
The true sincerity of their acclaim,
Was much concern'd the people render'd now
To him the homage due to God alone;
His soul was grieved to think that freeborn men
Could fall down on their knees to honour him,
And bow themselves before a fellow-man;
He thus express'd aloud his discontent:
"It seems this people would ev'n make a God
Of me, a man! Our cause I know is just,
And our affairs are prosperous as yet;
But much I fear the wrath of Heaven will fall
On me for this vain-glorious puppet-play,
And thus will show this fond and foolish crowd
Too soon my mortal, weak humanity!"

Friedland had now advanced in full array
As far as Weissenfels, expecting that
Gustavus would move forward and attack;
But there he was deceived, the King intrench'd
His troops near Naumburg, choosing to await
The reinforcements which were hastening up.
Between the Swedish camp and Weissenfels
The road ran through a narrow, rocky pass,
Which, though the heights Count Colloredo held,
Friedland did not much care to venture through,
Lest, taken at a disadvantage there,
A battle might be forced ere he could draw
His army duly order'd out the gorge.

But, as the winter now was coming on,
He was uncertain what was best to do ;
His forces sorely needed rest, and he
Could not much longer them that rest deny ;
And yet, with Sweden's veterans camping near,
He must attack, or all the winter long
Defensive stand and thus prolong the war.
He call'd a council to determine on
The course to take the long campaign to end.

His generals one and all for rest declared :
All were afraid the Monarch to attack
On ground of his own choosing, and intrench'd ;
And since the season was so late, they thought
Gustavus would not force hostilities,
But, strong in his position, wait till spring,
Content to hold their army thus in check.
Cologne was threaten'd by the Dutch, and now
The lower Rhine was render'd insecure,
The Imperial garrisons in danger set ;
So Friedland, who at length believed the King
At Naumburg had his winter-quarters fix'd,
Determined he would billet out his men
Upon the towns around, but order'd so
That they could quickly muster at command,
Should Gustave ever move from out his lines.
And since he thought he might some regiments spare,
He order'd Pappenheim to march forthwith
Upon Cologne, with well-nigh half his force,
And hold the lower Rhine against the Dutch.
The winter would give time, he hoped, again
His old proposals to renew, and since
He now had proved his power to raise and hold
Armies at his command, he deem'd the King
Would be the more inclined to lend an ear

To the high terms which he before refused.
And, though that same refusal rankled still,
It was o'ershadow'd by the deadly hate
He bore to Ferdinand, and by the dread
He felt of meeting Gustave in the field,
And risking all the fruits of plotting years
Upon the uncertain issue of the fight ;
For well he knew Gustavus' genius soar'd
Beyond his powers, ev'n as the eagle's flight
Is loftier than the carrion vulture's aim.

But hardly had he thus determined, than
The King broke up his camp, and hurried on
To attack ; and Friedland, horrified, first heard
Of his approach when Colloredo fired
Three cannon shots to announce Gustavus pass'd
In marching-order through the gorge below.
Gladly had he avoided battle now,
Finding himself outgenerall'd once again ;
For he could only place twelve thousand men,
Since Pappenheim's departure, 'gainst his force
And Weimar's, twenty thousand strong.
If he fell back, it would look like defeat,
For Gustave doubtless would at once pursue ;
And it would greatly tell against his fame
A second time from Sweden to withdraw,
Refusing battle fairly offer'd him.
Near Luetzen, quickly mustering all his troops,
He took position to await the King,
Despatch'd expresses to the Morizburg,
Which Pappenheim had orders to reduce
Ere he set out towards the lower Rhine,
Recalling him ; and bade him come at once,
Using his utmost speed to force his march ;
And sent off Isolani to the pass,

To hold as long as possible the Swedes
In check, and thus gain time for Pappenheim
To bring his forces back to his command;
When he would have again superior might,
And with the advantage of the choice of ground
Could hope to win the day against the King.

'Twixt Luetzen and Markranstadt, the high road
From Weissenfels to Leipzig is cut through
By a canal that leaves the Elster's stream
To join the river Saal at Merséburg.
Here Friedland's army stood, with its left wing
Resting on this canal; the right wing stretch'd
Behind the town of Luetzen, and the road
With skirmishers and musketeers was lined,
Who held the ditches which on either side
The causeway bounded; these they widen'd still
And dug out deeper, forming thus a work
Which in itself was not to be despised;
But back'd by seven great guns in battery,
That frown'd behind the embankment, it became
A formidable fieldwork drawn along
The front of Wallenstein's assembled force.
Mass'd in five heavy columns, there they stood
To await the foe, the horse on both the flanks;
The artillery, except the seven great guns,
Friedland had planted on the windmill heights,
Near Luetzen, whence it could sweep all the plain.
His baggage-men he arm'd, and bade them stand
Upon the left till Pappenheim should come
They then were to retire and yield him place
To fall with his fresh troops upon the Swedes.
Thus over night had Friedland all prepared,
And waited but for dawn and Pappenheim.

But hardly were the Austrians thus array'd,
Than Gustave too appear'd upon the field ;
And, though it now was evening, also set
His troops in battle-order on the plain.
As he had done at Leipzig, so again
He scatter'd horsemen in the footmen's ranks ;
Among his cavalry he interspersed
Stout pikemen and good marksmen, musketeers,
Whom he in groups between the squadrons placed.
Himself commanded on the right ; the left
Bernard of Weimar led, and on his flank
The German horse their battle-station took ;
The centre Count de Brahy ruled ; behind
This fighting line another marshall'd stood,
And still behind the two a small reserve.
The Swedish right was flank'd by the canal,
Which also ran behind them in the rear ;
In front arose the battery Friedland placed
Behind the earthworks on the road, which he
Had lined with double rows of musketeers ;
While Bernard on the left stood opposite
The town of Luetzen, situate between
The two confronting armies' outstretch'd wings.
Thus both sides pass'd the long November night,
Awaiting there the dawn full anxiously ;
For well the soldiers knew, the morrow's field
Would be most desperate, and, win who might,
The hard-fought battle would be dearly gain'd.

Beneath a wagon-tilt Gustavus spent
The night in converse with his generals,
For, like our own great-hearted Nelson, he
Was on the eve of battle overborne
With sense of awe, akin almost to dread.
To each the coming death was present then,—

Each felt he must at last in victory fall;—
Each knew the risks he would incur, since he
Had been so often to those risks exposed,
And marvell'd in his mind he had till now
Escaped the death he knew must come at last,
Its chances surer with each fight survived.
The hero still is human: life to him
Is just as sweet, death as repugnant, as
'Tis to the craven. In the weaknesses
To which the flesh is heir, men are ev'n all,
The heroes and the cowards, much alike,
For all are mortal; but the difference,
The great distinction, in the spirit lies!
By which the true man conquers even self,
The baser nature of humanity,
And to a higher standard ever aims,
Impell'd thereto by Duty's, Honour's call.
Such men are not, since death they never shun,
Ashamed to own its ever-present dread.
They enter battle with a joyful sense
Of victory assured, but yet of awe,
Exulting in the conflict which shall crown
For evermore their glorious career.

The morning dawn'd upon the battle-field;
But all the forenoon long the armies stood,
Yet motionless, in their opposing ranks;
So dense a fog o'erspread the level plain
Not ev'n the foreposts could each other see:
The stifled hum, the din and clang of arms
Alone proclaim'd a marshall'd multitude.
The tramp of steeds and rumbling of the guns,
Placed slowly in position, there betray'd
Movements of import through the deadening mist.
The hours thus gain'd Friedland knew how to use:

It seem'd that Nature yet again would aid,
And grant the time by this enforced delay
That Pappenheim would need to bring his troops,
And thus a second time avert defeat
His faulty generalship so well deserved.
Leaving the litter which the day before
He, suffering from the gout, had occupied,
Borne o'er the field his regiments to array;
He now, in spite of pain, bestrode his steed,
Rode up and down his ranks and thus harangued
His troops, and bade them stand their ground until
Came Pappenheim's division on the field,
When victory would easily be gain'd.
Gustavus, on his side, on horseback rode
From flank to flank along his army's front,
And carefully his marshall'd troops review'd,
Giving minute instructions for the day.
Dismounting then, he knelt upon the ground,
And with him knelt at once his whole array,
And pray'd to God, the Lord of battled hosts,
To grant them victory in His Cause and theirs.
Then, rising from his knees, the King upraised
In clearest tones the noble Lutheran hymn—
“A Tower of strong defence our God,”—and as
He sang the soldiers round join'd in, and then
The regimental bands, until the plain
Resounded loud with twice ten thousand tongues.
Next follow'd when the glorious chant was done—
“God will indeed be merciful to us,”—
And then the Monarch gave the battle-word,
As now the mist clear'd somewhat, “God with us.”
Then vaulting on his charger he rode down
The ranks, and, passing, spoke a few brief words,
Such enthusiasm kindling in the host
That no man thought of wounds, or death, but long'd,

Eager for battle, for the fog to rise
To rush in headlong onslaught on the foe.

Nor had they long to wait: as now the mist
Towards noon thinn'd more and more, the Austrian ranks
Loom'd indistinctly on the plain, and soon
The whole position,—breastwork, batteries,
The five divisions drawn up on the field,
The windmill heights, were plainly visible,—
The town of Luetzen bursting out in flame;
For Friedland set the place on fire, lest it,
Being carried by the Swedes, and occupied,
Should form a vantage-post to turn his flank.
Thus his position everywhere was strong:
The blazing town his right wing hid, his left,
Resting on the canal, was also safe,
On neither could he be outflank'd; the Swedes
Must thus attack him full in front, and there
The double ditch held by the musketeers,
The seven great guns in battery placed behind
Must first be carried, and, when this was done,
The Swedish ranks into confusion thrown,
Thinn'd by the muskets' and the cannons' fire,
Must first the shock encounter of the whole
Of his five columns in the level plain.
Friedland might well be confident that he
Could stand his ground till Pappenheim should come:
When greater numbers hurl'd upon the foe
Would carry all before them—gain the day.

But not a man in all the Swedish host
Quail'd at the awful scene before them spread;
The signal given, the line at once rush'd on
To storm the ditches, straight upon the guns.
The King upon the right wing thunder'd down

On Friedland's left in fierce, impetuous charge :
His heavy Finland cuirassiers dispersed
The light-horsed Poles and Croats, cut their way
Right through the Austrian troopers on that flank,
And, turning, charged again upon their rear.
Bernard of Weimar launch'd his German horse
Upon the Austrian right, and rode straight through
The flames and smoke of Luetzen on the foe ;
And all the Swedish cannon pour'd their shot
In thunder'd volley on the battery,
And on the musket trenches of the road !
Then out the wall of smoke with rending cheer
Their battle-line swept down upon the guns,
Silent till now, but bursting into flame,—
As soon as it within a hundred yards
Approach'd the outer ditch that lined the road,—
With awful roar that caused the earth and air,
As though convulsed by the last crash of doom,
To quake and tremble ; as each deep report
Died on the breeze most ominously roll'd
The muskets' rattle in a rending peal.
Fast fell the Swedes before that deadly fire :
More deadly even than the sounding guns,
Though they belch'd forth a hundredweight of hail
At every shot, a thousand iron balls.
Wide gaps were rent in their assaulting ranks,
But with a shout the Swedish line press'd on,
Carried the first and then the second ditch,
And so rush'd headlong in upon the guns ;
While still the foe their monster pieces load
They fall before the Northern warriors' swords.
The battery is won, the seven great guns,
All double shotted, are turn'd quickly round,
And fired upon the columns close behind ;
The first and second, panic-stricken, turn,

The Swedes are now among them hand to hand ;
They break, and in their coward terror throw
The third into confusion too ; and seem'd
The battle now for Austria wholly lost.
But Friedland hurried from his beaten wing,
Since greater danger in his centre lay,
And launch'd forthwith three regiments of his horse
Upon the conquering Swedes, and thus gain'd time
The beaten columns to re-form, and stay
The flight which had already there begun.
His presence saves the day, his troops inspired
Anew with courage from his energy,
And the fierce glance of his terrific eye,
And stern reproaches, far more terrible
Than ev'n the Swedish steel to craven hearts,
Charge furiously upon the advancing line.
Supported by the other columns now,
They close in hand to hand, and steel to steel,
And with the weight of numbers overpower
The veteran Swedes, who slowly yield the ground.
In vain among the guns de Brahy strives
To stand and hold the foe ; Bernard in vain
Hastes up to aid ; the battery is regain'd,
And then the ditch : though there the gallant Swedes
Fight with a desperate courage, 'tis in vain ;
The road is won, the outer ditch ; and now
The foe re-occupies his vantage ground,
And all de Brahy gain'd at length is lost.

But on the right, where Gustave led, himself,
The foe was vanquish'd, and the battle won ;
And nothing more was left but to pursue
And chase the beaten wing from off the field ;
But at this moment at the Monarch's side
An officer reins in his foaming steed,

And tells him that de Brahy's first assault
Has fail'd, and that the captured battery
Is now retaken, and the Swedes, hard press'd,
Can scarcely hold the ditches on the road.
The Duke of Weimar asks for speedy aid,
For on the left wing, too, the battle now
Inclines against him ; from the windmill heights
The Austrian cannon play with dread effect.
The King turn'd round to Eric : " Bid," he said,
" Gustavus Horn pursue the beaten foe,
And not allow them to re-form again ;—
And then ride after me." At once he call'd
Upon the Stenbock cuirassiers, and sped
Across the battle-field the shortest way,
Urging his charger both with voice and spur,
And soon outstript the troopers whom he led.
Leaping the ditches, still he held his course,
And with few horsemen at his heels, among
Them Duke Frank Albert of Sax Lauenburg,
He rode straight for the thickest of the fray.
An Austrian corporal, who saw him, call'd
Out to a musketeer " Aim, aim at him—
He surely is an officer of rank."
The soldier fired, the bullet took effect,
Shattering the King's left arm, and even then
His troopers catch him up and hear the cry
His nobles raise, " The King is hit." That cry
Spreads consternation through the horsemen's ranks,
Which Gustave soon perceived, and call'd aloud,
"'Tis nothing. Follow me." But he ere long,
Faint from the loss of blood, has hardly strength
To ask the Duke to lead him out the press.
The latter takes him by a long way round,
For Gustave does not wish his men to see
Their Monarch, stricken, from the field retire :

But as they went another shot was fired,
And, badly wounded now, the Hero cried
"Brother, it is enough, seek thou to save
Thine own life."—Then to earth he, senseless, fell,
Pierced through and through with volley'd musket-balls,
And, hanging in the stirrup, was dragg'd on
Some paces further in among the foe,
The savage Croats, who stripp'd him of his coat
And rifled it of all its ornaments,
Not knowing who he was. His followers,
Except the Duke of Lauenburg, were all
Shot down or cut to pieces, to a man.

Thus fell, obscurely, by an unknown hand,
The greatest soldier of his age, a man
Too noble and too generous for this earth;—
A king of kings, the pattern for all time.
He fell in victory—his work was done,
The Lutheran Faith he fully had secured,
And to his life his death has set a seal
Which shall endure for ever, ev'n when earth
Shall pass away and time shall be no more.
Through all Eternity he will enjoy
The full reward which merit such as his
May claim as due, the recompense which Earth
Cannot afford. In Heaven his place is set
Among the noblest, those unselfish souls—
The few select from worlds on worlds which gem
The spangled midnight skies, and worlds beyond,
Million on million spheres the mortal eye
Cannot pierce into; and among those few
To him shall no superior be found
Of all created beings—God alone
In His Three Persons can be more supreme!

I cannot sing his praises : language fails,
And earthly measures are not capable
Of rendering to his memory justice due,
Then far less honour. May it be my lot,
In that bright world to which his soul is gone,
My happiness, in grander fuller strains—
In verse transcending in melodious sound
The loftiest flights and sweetest harmonies
By ancient or by modern Muse inspired—
To hymn the glories of his full reward :
A sequel to these poor and halting lines,
Which fain would glorify his grand career
Ev'n here upon the earth ; but if it be
Mankind shall learn to estimate at length
At its true value his self-sacrifice,
The unselfishness of his heroic soul,
And strive, in dealing with their fellow-men,
Like qualities to Gustave's to display,
Through aught that I have written in his praise,
I shall not then have lived in vain, for Heaven
Will be brought nearer to the earth thereby.

Gustavus fell. His charger, riderless,
The saddle-housings deeply dyed with blood,
Scour'd down the battle-ranks in wild career ;
And thus the soldiers learn'd their Monarch's fall.
A cry of anguish pass'd along the line,
"It is the King's !" for well those warriors knew
And recognised at once his favourite steed ;
Then in a moment gave vent to a shout
Of vengeance, as with one accord they rush'd,
With desperate fury, headlong on the foe
And carried all before them, won again
Both ditches and the battery behind,
And fell upon the Austrian columns then

In such fierce onslaught nothing could withstand.
The left wing pushing onward gain'd the heights
And took the guns which from the windmills play'd
Such havock with their ranks ; while General Horn
Follow'd upon the right the victory
That Gustave had already gain'd. The foe,
Seeing the cannon taken, and their fire
Turn'd on themselves, and both their wings in flight,
Began to waver ; at that moment burst
Report upon report upon their ears,
As one by one their powder-wagons all
Blew up and scatter'd death and wounds around,
As bombs and petards fell among their ranks.
Thinking their flank at last was turn'd, in spite
Of Friedland's rage and menaces, they broke,
And all was lost. The rout began, the Swedes
Were now victorious all along the line ;
But at that moment Pappenheim appear'd
Upon the field and turn'd again the day.

His troops were busy plundering the town
When Friedland's urgent messages arrived
At Hallè ; and, as Pappenheim could not
Without great loss of time collect his men,
Eight regiments of dragoons and cuirassiers
He hurriedly assembled, and with them
Rode off at once for Luetzen, ordering
The infantry to follow with all speed :
And thus arrived upon the battle-field
Ev'n at this crisis, and but just in time
To save the Austrians from complete defeat.
Not knowing that Gustave was kill'd, he charged
Into the thickest press, as there he knew
The Swedish King he would most likely meet ;

Determined to avenge his overthrow
At Leipzig, and retrieve his laurels lost,
Engaging hand to hand, to either slay
The King, himself, or else by him to fall.
The sudden onset of his bold assault
Told on the Swedish troops, exhausted now
By the fierce effort of their wild despair,
Which for a moment in resistless flood
Had borne down all before it, but was spent
Ev'n by the fury of its onslaught's force.
And Friedland seized the opportunity
His headlong charge afforded to once more
Re-form his lines and lead them on anew.
Outnumber'd now, the Swedes were forced to yield,
Although most stubbornly they stood their ground.
The yellow regiment, brave and veteran troops,
Held desperately the seven captured guns,
And fell there, to a man, in perfect rank ;
The blue was cut to pieces, too, at length
By Piccolomini when few were left
To still withstand his charges, which they had
Repulsed six times with ever-thinning front.
A second time the battery was lost ;—
A second time the Swedes were driven beyond
The ditches it had cost so much to win :
And now most murderously the battle raged
Upon the south side of the parting road,
And Bernard and de Brahy were compell'd
To fall back on their own artillery,
Which otherwise the foe had even gain'd.
Victory seem'd hopeless now, and if they could
But make a stand until the night came on,
And then draw off the field, it was as much
As from their wearied veterans they could ask,
Or from their generalship the troops expect.

Eric, ere yet the battle-fortune turn'd,
Seeking the King, had met Sax Lauenburg,
And, thinking that the Monarch had dispatch'd
Him from the ranks upon some errand, ask'd
His Sovereign's whereabouts. The Duke replied
He greatly fear'd the King had fallen, he knew
Him to be badly hit, and saw his steed
Bear him among the foe. But Eric stared,
As though his words he comprehended not ;
And not until the Duke repeated them,
And plainly said he fear'd the King was dead,
Found speech: "What! dost thou mean," at last he cried,
"To tell me that thou saw'st the King borne in
Among the foe, and didst thyself not speed
To rescue,—that thou saw'st the Monarch fall
And yet survivest, his death to calmly tell?
Well mayst thou, craven, turn thy charger's rein
And fly the battle—never more 'mong men
Canst thou lift up thine head, the meanest Swede
Would spurn thee as he would a murderer.
It cannot be ; thou dost not surely mean
The King is fallen ; it is a jest, ill-timed,
But yet a jest. Oh, say it is a jest!"——
But heedless rode Sax Lauenburg away,
And answer'd nothing more. He took indeed,
After the battle, service in the ranks
Of Saxony, and then soon afterwards
Went over to the Austrians. At the least
His conduct was suspicious, and the Swedes
For some long time attributed to him
Their Monarch's death, since he alone escaped
Unwounded even where all others fell
Who were around the King. 'Twas said he brought
About his end, and led him by design
Into the hostile ranks, himself secure

From Austrian bullets, since he wore a sign,
A green silk scarf, by which he might be known.
Some went ev'n further, and declared that he,
With his own hand, had fired the fatal shot :
But, though the Austrian Court was capable
Of using any means to rid itself
Of such a dangerous foe as Gustave proved—
Though Rome and Lemormain had justified
The deed; and sanctified the assassin's crime,
As quite in good accord with Jesuit guile—
Yet we may well acquit Sax Lauenburg
Of all but cowardice in leaving him,
The dying King, in his extremity ;
His after-conduct was result of scorn,
Contempt, the Lutherans display'd to him :
A craven nature such as his revenge
Against false accusation thus would seek,
Would answer scorn and openly express'd
Contempt and loathing in just such a way.

On riding further, Eric learn'd full soon
The dreaded truth, the blood-stain'd saddle told
A tale that was too unmistakable :
And, hearing from the officers around
Confused accounts of how and where he met
His death, he hasten'd to the spot to seek
Among the slain his much-loved master's corpse.
Around him raged the conflict as again
The furious Swedes rush'd forward to avenge
Their Monarch's fall ; the battle died away
As they in fierce assault before them bore
The wavering Austrian ranks ; but Eric knew
No more, nor cared at all how went the day.
Absorb'd in his sad task, he noted not
The battle-signs that he, with eager eye

And beating heart, was wont impatiently
To scan—the charge, the crash of mingling ranks,
The squadrons reeling on the serried line
Of levell'd pikes and flashing halbert-points,
Seen indistinctly through the dust and smoke,—
Nor mark'd what he had otherwise been first
With his keen eyes to notice, Pappenheim's
Arrival with his horse upon the field.
What matter'd it to him the battle won,
Since he who led them on to victory
Their triumph could not share;—what matter'd now
Defeat? It were a feather in the scale,
Borne down already by the heavy weight
Of overpowering grief for Gustave's loss.
Let come what would, it matter'd now no more,
When nothing matter'd. Would that he had been
Still at his Monarch's side, perchance he might
Have saved him, or, if not, at least he could
Have died with him,—but to live on alone,
And bear throughout his life the racking thought,
That he was absent when his master fell!—
In vain he sought among the dead to find,
Dreading to find it, the belovèd form,
Heedless of cries for water and for aid
The wounded feebly raised at his approach,
Imploring him for love of God to bring,
To quench their raging thirst, if but a drop.
At any other time, the sickening scene
Had overcome him, but he now was blind
To all, intent upon his anxious search,
Deaf to appeals of anguish and despair.
His heart was broken, and his own distress
Allow'd no thought of others' sufferings;
For even now Gustavus on the field
Might yet be lying, bleeding, without help,

Which, could it come in time, might even save
His precious life. What, then, were others' lives,
Compared with but the chance, the faintest hope,
Of saving his, so precious to the world?
From corpse to corpse he hurried, where the dead
Lay thickest piled upon the gory plain,
Hoping 'gainst hope to find him still alive.
Spurr'd on by hope, he sped from heap to heap,
Grudging the minutes which he spent in vain.
He could not realise his Monarch's death;
He would not yet believe the fearful truth;
For, though his soul misgave him, yet it seem'd
Impossible that he, so confident
That morn of victory, so full of life
And bounding energy, of joyful trust,
Could now be lying, stark and motionless,
Upon the battle-field, his place unknown,
In mystery veil'd the manner of his death.

An hour or more thus pass'd in fruitless search,
Till even Eric of his life despair'd;
If wounded, he ere this had bled to death,
His lifeless body only would be found.
The battle-tide, which had resistless flow'd
For Sweden when her veterans wildly rush'd
In furious onset to avenge their King,
Now ebb'd once more as Pappenheim hurl'd back
Their broken lines again across the road,
And Eric finds himself borne backward now
By their retreat, and ere he is aware
Is in the press, where still the Swedes withstand
The furious onslaughts of the Austrian horse,
Disputing sullenly, and foot by foot,
The twice-won ground they vainly strive to hold
As we have seen the battery was lost,



From corpse to corpse he hurried, where the dead
Lay thickest piled upon the gory plain.

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And then the ditches, and the conflict raged
Now for the first time on the Swedish side.
Sorrow gives way to frenzy, and since he
Can do no more for his beloved King,
He will avenge him, and avenging fall.
Drawing his sword again, he bursts his way
Into the fellest carnage, where the fight
Rages in fury, and where thickest falls
The hail of lead, where Pappenheim's dragoons
In thundering gallop crash upon the line.
"Swedes," he exclaims "out yonder on the field
Your Monarch's body lies, and ye fall back
As though ye value life and dare not die!
The field on which he lies we will regain,
Or die there with him. Forward! Follow me!
It is the least that we can do to show
Our love for him, our noble, generous King!
This field we must regain—men ne'er shall say
We suffer'd him, victorious all his life,
First in his death to undergo defeat,
Because we did not dare to die with him;
Forsaking to the foe the field he won,
Leaving his body lying where he fell,
The prize of victory, in Friedland's power,
For Austria to expose to scoff and scorn,
And Jesuit priests and Rome to desecrate
With ignominious insult. Comrades, charge!
All ye who loved him! Forward! Follow me!"

Nobly the veterans rallied to the cry,
And with a desperate energy once more
Push'd back the enemy and won again
The road; the battle, undecided, raged
More furious than before—each side put forth
Efforts supreme as now the evening closed.

Friedland was in the thickest of the fight,
Encouraging his troops ; and, as he stood
Cool and collected in the hottest fire,
It seem'd as though the bullets had no power
To harm him, though his soldiers round him fell,
Although his very cloak was riddled through
And through with balls, his person still remain'd
Untouch'd by all, and not a scratch or graze
Received he in this desperate battle, where
Scarce any officer on either side
Escaped unhurt entirely. Pappenheim,
Pierced through the breastplate by two musket-balls,
Was carried, sorely wounded, to the rear,
Where first he learn'd his great opponent's fall,
Whom he all day had sought upon the field.
His features, wrung with dreadful agony,
Brighten'd thereon, and he his joy express'd :
" Tell ye the Duke of Friedland that I lie
Hopelessly stricken with two mortal wounds,
But yet my soul is happy, and will part
Contented from the body, since I know
That he, my creed's most unremitting foe,
Has fallen with me on the selfsame field."

His fall being quickly rumour'd through the ranks,
The infantry, whom he alone restored
To battle-order, once more wavering broke,
And Friedland gave up every hope to save
The day, thrice lost ; and as the sun went down,
The Swedish lines, now merged in one, led on
By Bernard, won the batteries again,
Storming the ditches for the third, last time.
The darkness brought the fighting to an end,
And saved the regiments which yet held their ground
From being cut to pieces where they stood.

The day was won, the victory complete;
Throwing away their arms, the Austrians fled,
And hurried into Leipzig, losing all
Their cannon, baggage, standards, in their flight.
The town was choked with fugitives, a mob
Who could no more make head against the Swedes;
And Friedland, fearing for his safe retreat,
If he should try to hold the place, fell back
At once on Prague, where he courts-martial held,
And in his fury hang'd and quarter'd all
Among the officers he dared condemn,
Hoping thereby to save his fame and lay
The blame of his deserved defeat on them.
The names of others, who escaped his wrath
By timely flight, the hangman nail'd upon
The gallows by his orders. While a few,
Who show'd distinguish'd courage in the fight,
And whom he wish'd to rivet to his cause,
He loaded with his favours, and bestow'd
Upon them treasure with a princely hand:
Yet for all that in them he was deceived
When he threw off the mask some fifteen months
After this date, and openly declared
Revolt against the Kaiser, hoping to
Gain them from their allegiance to the throne.
Deserted then by those in whom he placed
His confidence, his long-plann'd, cherish'd scheme
Fail'd utterly, and he was forced to fly
To Eger with a remnant of his host,
The faithful few, or rather those he deem'd
Faithful and true to him,—by them betray'd,
He fell a victim to his lust of power,
Deceived by all, ev'n by the stars on which
He trusted to build up a great career.
Not *his* the soldier's death upon the field:

The hired assassin at the midnight hour
Broke through his guards and forced his chamber-door,
And, in the Kaiser's name, at his bedside
Plunged in his traitor breast the avenging steel ;—
And thus, unwept, unpitied ev'n, he fell,
His name an execration to all time,
Outwitted even in his villany,
As he had been out-generall'd in the field.

The Swedes had won a glorious victory,
But mourn'd it more than they had mourn'd defeat :
The Monarch, who had led them hitherto
From field to field victorious, could no more
In person head their armies ; though the power
Of his grand Genius might be present still,
If every man would cherish in his soul
The Hero's influence, and would strive to keep
The lofty standard which they knew their King
Would have them aim at were he still alive.
Long time they sought his body, and the search
Was long in vain ; at last beneath a heap
Of piled-up dead they found it, smear'd with gore,
Cover'd with wounds, and trodden by the hoofs
Of charging squadrons ;—not far from a stone,
Some ancient landmark, which has since been named
The Swedish Stone, in memory of his fall,
And planted round with poplars, thus to show
To all the country, even from afar,
The very spot where he was sacrificed,
A Royal victim to the Lutheran Cause—
Religion's, Freedom's—where, by offering up
His life at last, *he* seal'd his grand career
Of glorious conquest and unselfishness ;—
Whose Genius freed the nations from Rome's thrall,
And made it once for all impossible

For Priestcraft o'er the world to domineer;—
 Whose conquering arms saved Europe's liberties,
 And curb'd the ambitious Austrian House, which sought
 To impose, leagued with the Jesuits and Spain,
 Its cruel yoke upon the other States,
 The Sovereign States of Germany, whose power
 By ancient law was equal to its own;—
Who was example in one man combined
 Of Christian warrior, statesman, hero, King;—
Who, of the world's great conquerors, alone,
 Sought not his own ambition's selfish end,
 Nor ever aim'd, by pride of power led on,
 O'er man to tyrannise with despot sway:
 But, faithful to his mission, ne'er forgot
 The mightiest conqueror is mortal still,
 And thus, unlike the rest, who all succumb'd,
He held the great temptation still in check;
 And gain'd thereby a victory o'er himself,
 Far nobler and of more exalting worth
 Than battle-triumphs even in a cause
 Like his—Religion's, Freedom's,—just and right.
 For *he*, instead of sacrificing to
 The lust of power the peoples of the earth,
 Chose rather, for the nations' weal, *himself*
 To sacrifice. Say—is not *he* a King,
 Not by the Right Divine, but by his deed?
 And shall not men, as long as earth endures,
 Pay grateful homage to his memory?
 And through Eternity remember still
 The Great Gustavus—truly call'd the "Great"?

A sad procession slowly wound its way,
 In silent lamentation and sincere,
 To Weissenfels, and, though no Royal pomp,
 No blazon'd pageantry of courtly pride,

Glitter'd in tinsel gorgeousness around
The Warrior's simple bier, yet none the less
Mourn'd the whole army for the King, his loss
Each soldier felt was irretrievable.
The victory was forgotten in the gloom
Of heart-felt sorrow, as the veterans gazed
Their last upon the features of the Man
For whom they would have gladly, proudly died.
'Twas not so much their King they now beheld
There on the open bier,—it was their Friend—
The Sharer of their hardships and their toils—
The simple Soldier, to their hearts endear'd,—
More than the mighty Conqueror, who sway'd
The destinies of Europe, and who broke
In two short years the power of Papal Rome,
And freed the world for ever from her chain.
The honest tribute of those loyal hearts,
Express'd in language rough, uncouth, perchance,
Counted for more than swelling, polish'd phrase
And flowing periods trumpeted aloud
In vain oration to a careless world,
Such as the tyrant's hirelings would have used ;—
Which are as soon forgotten as the sound
Of thunder'd minute guns dies on the breeze,
Whose booms the despot's obsequies proclaim—
At Weissenfels the Queen received the bier
To fling herself in wildest grief upon
Her husband's corpse—and thus they met again ;
Her dream—alas !—too literally fulfill'd.
The Body was embalm'd, and then convey'd
To Stockholm for interment,—but the Heart,
The mighty Heart that beat for Europe's woes,
Was buried in the land for which it bled.



BOOK XII.

The Burning of Traubeneck and the Golden Wedding.

'Twas evening on the Rhine: the sun
Had not yet sunk below the hill,
His golden radiance now was flung
Upon the cloudbank dark, that hung
Over the river, weeping still;
For the April shower was hardly done,
And the sunbeam bright
Had spann'd with a gorgeous bow,
With an arch of refracted light,
The foaming waters' flow,
And, resting upon the hilltop's ridge,
Thrown over the river, had form'd a bridge.

It was a scene on which to gaze,
An all-enchancing view;
A picture framed in the wondrous haze
Of the rainbow's varied hue:—
The vine-clad hills, half hid in mist,
As the passing clouds their summits kiss'd,
Lit up by the streaming ray.
Streak'd with a bar of burnish'd gold,
The river's silver volume roll'd
Where the slanting sunbeams play,

Contrasting with the deep-black sky,
Whose vaporous masses swiftly fly
 Before the evening breeze.
The woods reflected in the stream
Whose waters like a mirror gleam,
 The freshness of the trees,
And the pure white walls of the town below,
 Far down on the other side,
Built close on the marge of the river's flow,
 As though rising from out the tide,—
Made up a scene of loveliness
 Such as we picture Heaven :
Well might the happy dalesmen bless
 Him Who them all had given !

So Eric thought, as on the stream
 From Traubeneck's tower he cast his eye,
As he watch'd the light of the golden beam
 Shot down from the now fast-clearing sky ;—
As he gazed upon the varying glow
 Of the gorgeous arch high overhead,
The violet and orange and emerald bow,
 In mingling hues of grandeur spread.
And long he dwelt on the peaceful scene,
 The glories of the far-famed Rhine ;
Its beechwoods in their first spring green,
 Its hillsides cover'd with the vine,
The wavelets rippling at their feet ;
 The river broadening to a lake,
So clear the expanse of its silver sheet,
 For a polish'd mirror he might take ;
For in its waters reflected shone
 The rocks and the vineyards, the wooded hill,
And the houses all appear'd every one,
 For with the rain ceasing the surface was still.

And as he gazed he heaved a sigh,
That earth should be so wondrous fair,
And, though he might a lifelong try,
No happiness could he find there,—
For him all joy had pass'd away
With Gustave's fall on Luetzen's day.

Wounded himself in the desperate fight,
He fell as Pappenheim's squadrons reel'd
Before the avenging Swedish might,
And lay upon the ground all night,
Unconscious, on the blood-stain'd field.
A musket-bullet in his knee,
Another buried in his breast;
Despairing charge, and victory,—
A giddy faintness,—and the rest
Oblivion,—till, with memory,
Return'd the pangs of mind distress'd,
For which avails no healing care,
Far worse than racking throes to bear;—
More torturing than the throbbing pains
Of agony in the fever'd veins;—
More scathing than the fiery glow
Of the hot blood's fierce and pulsing flow.
Half dead upon the sodden ground,
Among the dead, was Eric found;
Beside him lay his dented brand
As it had fallen from his hand,
Around him, victims to its blows,
Were stretch'd the corpses of his foes,—
Proofs that what valour scarce would dare
Is counted nothing by despair.

Oh! much can Woman do
To soothe her love's distress,

And suffering Eric knew
In Hilda's sweet caress,
In time at length relief
From his overpowering grief;
And day by day,
As the first great bitterness wore away,
Her watchful presence by his bed,
And her gentle influence, hourly shed,—
The thoughtful, loving care,
By which she all his wants divined,—
Had made his sufferings light to bear,
Were it not that his spirit ever pined
For Gustave's loss,
His Sovereign who was aye his friend.
But in vain might the body mend,
For his soul by the weight of his heavy cross
Was ever borne down still;
Since his reason could not yet submit
To the Almighty's will,—
And still was prone to censure it
For tolerating ill.

Eric was all the soldier, and as yet
No overwhelming grief had ever known,
Had found it easy troubles to forget;
In joyous camp-life careless years had flown.
This was his first great sorrow, and his mind
Had well-nigh given way beneath the shock;
He hoped not—wish'd not ev'n to be resign'd,
His faith was not yet grounded on the rock.
That Gustave should have fallen, whom he thought
Chosen the conqueror's glorious part to play;
Through whom the nations' freedom would be wrought,
Whose Genius should bear universal sway:—

That he should fall, the brave, the great, the good,
By Eric's mind was scarcely understood ;
And in his grief he blamed the Infinite,
And dared to question whether God did right,
Or if He was, in truth, supreme in power and might.

In vain had Hilda tried to argue out
The evil spirit, to remove the doubt,—

Dark cloud which nought away could roll ;
Her father's, brother's deaths had she to mourn,
And so had learn'd that trials must be borne,
And fortitude must grief control.

Thankful that Eric still to her was spared,
She lavish'd love which they with him had shared

On him alone, gave him the whole.
Grieved as she was to see his deep distress,
His body's sufferings, spirit's wretchedness,

While she was powerless to console,
Yet to the maiden comfort now was brought,
She knew it selfish, but, oh ! rapturous thought !—

Eric was now her very own ;
With Gustave's fall a rival pass'd away,
Who o'er his heart held first and foremost sway,—

Now woman's love could reign alone :
And she would love him dearly, and would make
In love amends, and he would now forsake

The soldier's life, distasteful grown ;
And time would heal the smart of Gustave's fall,
And she to him will then be all in all,
And thus her selfishness atone.

Thus Hilda dream'd, but little knew
The warrior's chafing mind,
Which day by day more restless grew :
Peace he could never find,

Even though no more the camp could please,
In idle life of rusting ease.
For, while the Swedes still kept the field,
His battle-blade he, too, must wield ;
The laurels that his King had worn
Must not from his dead brows be torn.
The Faith that he had died to save,
Must, though he lies within the grave,
Be well upholden still ;
The Cause for which Gustavus bled,
While Swedish life-blood can be shed,
While Swedish swords can kill,
While Swedish arms can cut and thrust,
Shall not be trampled in the dust,
Nor bold defenders ever need,
To champion it with doughty deed :
Each soldier must his utmost strain
That Gustave's death be not in vain.

Alas ! for Hilda's dream
Of full, atoning love,
Though bright as April's gleam,
As fleeting it may prove.
The love that all suffices
A maiden's gentle soul,
The youth to taste entices
But cannot him control :
Love is to Woman all in all,
While but at times Man owns its thrall.

Love is the Woman's life,
Her being's end and aim ;
But Man is born to strife,
For lust of power or fame,

Desire of heaping riches,
Of gaining hidden lore,
From love his heart bewitches,
Enslaves him more and more ;
Till, finding there no place to stay,
From out his heart Love flies away.

Though none of all these causes moved
The youth's fond heart from her he loved,
Yet Hilda found, as day by day
Her watchful care successful proved,
That Eric's soul was far away.
He dwelt not on her beauty's grace,
He scarce return'd her fond embrace ;
Betrothèd lover's ardour high
No longer glow'd in beaming eye ;—
His thoughts were ever on the war,
But not as they had been of yore :
A mighty change she could discern,
The youth was to full manhood grown,
His life was set in purpose stern,
His dreams of warrior's fame were flown.
The camp no more, as when a boy,
Could move his soul with battle-joy ;
Nor marshall'd ranks, nor trumpet's call,—
For all was changed with Gustave's fall :
His spirit to its depths was stirr'd,
But not to deeds of venturous might ;
Now only vengeful duty spurr'd
His future in the Lutheran right.
His gleaming blade he long'd to wield
In Gustave's cause on many a field,
To live to triumph o'er the foe,
To aid in laying Austria low.

It seem'd for this he cared alone,
Vengeance should now be all his own ;
The mainspring it should ever prove,
Subordinate to it his love.
And Hilda fear'd her wedded life
Would be o'ercast in battle-storm,
Even as Elinore's had been ;
That she might, as a soldier's wife,
Another sad example form,
As sad as Gustave's widow'd Queen.

To turn the current of his mind,
His yearnings from the war away,
She, with her grandmother, design'd
That he at Traubeneck should stay,
As soon as he could safely bear
By easy stage the journey there.
The shot-wound in his breast soon heal'd,
More obstinate by far the knee ;
No soldier's service in the field
For many a day could Eric yield,
As he himself could plainly see.
Hilda to Oxenstiern appeal'd
For leave of absence, suasively,
And escort on the road to shield
The litter from the enemy,
Or other dangers there might be :
And thus by Oxenstierna's aid
The journey soon was safely made ;
And in the glorious Rhineland air,
Far from the scenes of blood and war,
Fond Hilda hoped her loving care
Would Eric soon to health restore.
In time he would become resign'd,
And, as he show'd an alter'd mind,

She would exert her utmost power
To keep him at their vine-girt tower.
And, who could tell, in long'd-for peace
These dreadful years of war must cease,
Both sides were weary of the strife,—
She might ev'n keep him there for life?
Sweden to him was nothing more,
That fatal day had alter'd all;
However much he loved before

His country, with his Monarch's fall
That love, it seem'd, had died away,
And he abroad would rather stay;
The Swedish Court he could not bear,
Missing Gustavus' presence there,
The glorious Rhine would ever please,
At Traubeneck they'd dwell at ease;
Nought left to him but love alone,
He would at length be all her own.

The winter had pass'd in that calm retreat,
And Eric's cure was well-nigh complete,

As now on this April eve,
At the turret window, in restless mood,
On the lovely scene he gazing stood;

Nor did he ev'n perceive
That Hilda had enter'd, and come to his side
To see the bow spanning the silver tide;
And thus, ere he her presence knew,

The plaintive murmur from him broke,—
Admiring there the wondrous view,
Aloud, though to himself, he spoke.

Her arms at once were round him thrown,

She clasp'd him in a fond embrace,
And chiding him in serious tone,

But yet betraying mischief's trace.

"Nay, Eric, this will never do,"

She said, "thou must be more resign'd ;—
Am I to be unhappy too ?

That, I am sure, was ne'er design'd.
Yet, love, since we shall soon be one,
If thou art, then am I undone.

On Providence we more should rest,

It all sufficient deem,

What Heaven sends is for the best,
Though strange to us it seem.

Then cease to nurse thy useless grief,
And suffer time to bring relief,

And work its healing cure :

I know, for I have sorrows known,
Their smart can not for aye endure.

Love, we are left alone ;

Thy purpose high in life is cross'd,
And I have father, brother, lost,

As thou hast lost thy King ;

But to each other we remain,

Life cannot then be all in vain ;

Secure in one another's love,

Our future yet shall happy prove,

Love will contentment bring."

"Thy future, Hilda, most I dread ;

All joy for me in life is fled,

Is fled, I fear, for thee.

Ah ! I had hoped my bride to claim,

And, resting on my well-won fame,

Reap thus the victory :

But canst thou be a soldier's wife,

To pass in camp an anxious life,

And greater hardships undergo

Than often fall to woman's lot ?

Of war but little thou dost know,
Though Nuernberg's siege be ne'er forgot ;
Yet that was nothing to retreat,
The miseries of night marches forced,
And less than nothing to defeat—
The horrors of a battle lost !
And canst thou, Hilda, all this bear
That thou a soldier's life wouldst share ?”

“Why must I share a soldier's life ?
Why talk'st thou still of war and strife ?
More than enough of blood is shed,
More than enough of tears ;
The noblest on both sides have bled,
The war has lasted years :
Peace cannot now be far away,—
Then let us here contented stay.
Thy wounds as yet are hardly well,
Thou in the knee wast sorely hit,
For camp and field thou art not fit.
Peace may be made, ay, who can tell,
Ere thou again thy steed canst sit ?
See, the good omen in the sky,—
Before the sun the storm-clouds fly ;
The rainbow's glorious arch is spread
In hopeful promise overhead ;
On every side are signs of spring,
The woods with joyous chorus ring,
The peaceful ripples sparkling play,
Released from icebound winter's sway
The hills again are clothed with green,
Once more the welcome stork is seen,
And soon the swallows will appear ;—
All speaks of joy and gladness here.

To this blest vale war will not come,
The battle-tide has roll'd away,
Here on the Rhine, then, let us stay;
And Traubeneck shall be our home,
Our life one lengthen'd wedding-day."

"Ah, Hilda, I know more than thou,
And I must even tell thee now.
Love! peace indeed will not be made;
I fear our joyous life-plans all
Are alter'd by Gustavus' fall;
I have my letters of recall.
The Cause needs every warrior's blade,
No longer than I must I stay,
Back to the camp I haste away,
Ev'n though the doctor shall say nay.
Too long already I have stay'd,—
Doctor and nurse are leagued, I fear
To keep me, Hilda, idle here.
What, sweet, in tears? It must be so,
Back to the war I needs must go;
Surely, my Hilda would not choose
That we the glorious fruits should lose
Of Gustave's grand career.
Oh! not in vain our Monarch bled,
For all the world his blood was shed;
Nor shall the nations Rome enslave
Though he is mouldering in the grave.
I must take part in this campaign,
Next winter I return again,
Then, Hilda, we will wed.
Her Eric's lot my love will share,
A soldier's hardships learn to bear."

"Eric, thou knowest that I love thee so,
That to the wide world's end I'd gladly go

If needs must be with thee :
If duty calls thee to the war away,
In widow'd loneliness I cannot stay,
Thy helpmate I must be.
We are betroth'd, why need we longer wait ?
Whatever it may be, I'll share thy fate !
The hardships of the camp will Hilda please,
With thee, far more than life of empty ease :—
Yet I had hoped—but there, love, I will not
With selfish, vain repinings vex thy soul,
But in my grief thy sorrow I forgot,
Myself I will in future more control.
Yet should I, Eric, sometimes still repine,
Thou must forgive me—I am truly thine.
With men stands Duty first—it should be so,
Than Love no other motive women know ;—
Love is our duty, and our Duty love,
To love alone we live, alone we move ;
No wonder that we sometimes, then, confound
Duty and Love.
Man is by stricter sense of duty bound :
Though we approve
His higher honour, yet we would not choose
To follow Duty if our Love must lose.
But, Eric, we will somehow both combine,
For well I know I cannot change thy mind ;
Thy leader Duty—Love shall still be mine,
E'en though the camp scarce room for it shall find.
Love, after all, will rule with greater sway,
Stern Duty to my Love will find a way :
Not till the winter's coming will we wait,
For thou wilt find in me a soldier's mate ;
And I believe I shall a better prove,
Than thou wouldst, Eric, lady's carpet-love."

Thus Hilda Eric sought to cheer,
But little thought the foe was near,

Hoping to gain a short delay,
And yet prolong her lover's stay ;
But Hilda still meant all she said,
Was quite prepared at once to wed,
To share the hardships of his life,
If need be, as a soldier's wife ;
She little thought she must soon prove
The prowess of her vaunted love.

But at the very hour,
While they conversed within the tower,
A lawless, ruffian, Spanish band
Was mustering on the other shore,
With catlike tread and muffled oar,
Their purpose in the dark to land,

And ere the moon should rise
To take the castle by surprise.
They knew 'twould be an easy feat,
It was a summer pleasure-seat,
Like many on the river-side ;

It was not built for modern war
And therefore was unfortified,
Except with usual bolt and bar :
Its gates, although from thieves secure,
An arm'd attack could not endure.

All this they knew: it might be won,
A wounded man its garrison,
Two ladies with their servants all,
One hardly could defenders call,
The aged steward scarce could aid,

No men besides were there,—
So little were they all afraid
Of robber-bands or foeman's raid,

They lived without a care ;
And found no need a watch to keep
To guard the castle's peaceful sleep.

The happy vale had known no strife
Within the oldest peasant's life ;
The war had raged above, below,
Had tinged with blood the river's flow ;
But, lying off the great highways,
These districts ever had been spared,
Even in Mansfeld's, Tilly's days
The cannon's thunder ne'er had heard :
Thus in their happiness secure,
The Spaniards deem'd their prey was sure.

The lovers in the castle tower
Had watch'd the rainbow colours fade
In the glories of the sunset hour
As on the ripples the radiance play'd ;
The rosy glow of dazzling light
Had vanish'd in the darkening night,
But Hilda still with Eric stay'd.
And much in truth they had to say,
For the maiden alter'd not her mind,—
If Eric must to the war away,
She at his side her place would find,
His perils and his hardships share——
But, hark ! on the still night air
A loud alarm is wildly rung,
The warning bell is madly swung
In the old grey belfry tower :
"The village, look ! is all on fire,
The red tongues mount above the spire ;—
Hark ! there is tumult down below,
It must be—yes—it is the foe,
And we are in their power."
Eric had flung his crutch aside,
Had reach'd his sword with a single stride ;
It hung upon the wall,

Where, with his pistols overhead,
It had been placed above his bed :
He seized them and his powder-flask,
And scarce had time his love to ask
 To load them both with ball,
Ere the foremost foes were in the room,
And the foremost man had met his doom.
His blade a flashing circle swept,
As, like a tiger, Eric leapt,
 With a terrific bound,
Upon him, smote him to the ground,
A headless corpse, with a single blow ;
A second laid his fellow low ;
 Then, while the rest hung back,
For the boldest well might courage lack
 To come too near his arm :
"Fly, Hilda, up the turret stair,"
He cried, "I can defend thee there,
 Thou shalt not come to harm."
"Nay, Sir!—we do not yet despair,
Not while I still my sword can wield,"
He answer'd one who bade him yield :
 And ere they were aware
He gain'd the door, the latch he drew,
And Hilda up the turret flew.
Behind the door he took his stand,
A pistol grasp'd in his left hand,
 His good sword in his right ;
All ready there to shoot or smite
The man who first should dare to burst
 Open the bolted door ;
 Let come who might,
Foemen a score, or even more,
 They must come one by one ;
And while he held the winding stair

Passage there could be none ;
The boldest ruffian would not care
To force the way, for a twelvemonth's pay,
And brave his calm despair.

They all hung back, and blankly gazed
Upon each other, much amazed,
And on the turret door ;
One headless trunk lay on the floor,
Another comrade's corpse they raised,
Steep'd in his own heart's gore.
Little for wounds or death they reck'd
In heated blood on battle-day,
But these they did not here expect,
They thought to make an easy prey ;
Their foul desires to all fulfil,
On 'fenceless' women to wreak their will,
And carry store of gold away.
A glorious night they had design'd,
Nor dream'd resistance here to find ;
But all too dear was now the spoil,
The sport would not be worth the toil ;
But yet, whatever life it cost,
The bolted door must ev'n be forced :
What would their fellows say,
If empty they should draw away,
Leaving their work undone ?
The tower was their apportion'd share,
The risk they must then even bear,
The turret must be won ;
Already through the castle rang
The shrieks of females in distress,
Hoarse shouts of triumph, weapons' clang,
Their comrades had achieved success,
The pillage had begun ;

The blazing village down below
Gleam'd on the Rhine in lurid glow,
And vividly the landscape show'd ;
It seem'd the sparkling river flow'd,
 Lit by a blood-red sun ;—
Thus all the rest had done their part,
Should they for ever daunted stand,
The boldest of a desperate band,
With blanching face and fainting heart,
 And idle, nerveless hand,
As though they even felt its smart,
 Foil'd by a sick man's brand ?

“Up, mates!” a bravo cried at last,
“It seems the lots must now be cast,
Since no man stomach hath to lead ;
And well I wot the first must bleed :
But we must force a passage there,
Up yonder winding turret stair ;
We must avenge our comrades' fall,
Their blood for his heart's-blood doth call.”
The dice were thrown, but even then
Hung back, dismay'd, those desperate men,
And he on whom the lot was cast
Felt that this hour would be his last.
Up to the door they slowly move,
And cautiously the fastenings prove ;
Their pikes as picks and crows they wield,
Until at last the hinges yield ;
Upon the oak their blows they rain,
To batter in the door amain ;
But still upon the bolts it hung,
And in their teeth defiance flung,
Jamm'd in the lintel, such its strength,
They must give o'er their blows at length ;

As of their useless task they tire,
They then bethink them first of fire.
Fuel against the door they heap,
Apply the torch, the flames upleap,
But still the stubborn heart of oak
Resists both fire and halbert's stroke ;
More wood they pile, the embers blow,
Until the hinges red-hot glow ;
But though the massive oak is charr'd,
It will not burn, is firmly barr'd ;
Nor can they yet the timbers force,
But must adopt some other course.

A few steps up the turret Eric stood,
His blade still dripping with its victims' blood,
His pistol firmly grasp'd ;
And Hilda, close behind him, praying, knelt ;
Her upturn'd eyes upon her lover dwelt,
Her hands to heaven were clasp'd.
Oh ! who can tell what there the maiden felt,
Though not a word escaped her lips, her eye,
Her pale white face betray'd her agony.
Though calm her features, she could not control
The inmost workings of her trembling soul ;
She did not fear to die :
If Eric fell she would not wish to live,
Her life for his too gladly she would give ;
For him she clasp'd her hands in tearless prayer,
For him she knelt upon the cold stone stair ;
Her course she had resolved—
She would stand by him in the coming fight,
Would aid him all a desperate woman might ;
Past the first terrors of her hurried flight,
Their chances she revolved :

His pistols she had learn'd to use in play,
In their fond wanderings by the brimming Rhine;
She thought not then that e'er would come the day
When she her arms with his must needs combine;
Now at his side the maiden, dauntless, stood,
Ev'n while she shudder'd at the sight of blood
Which trickled down his blade;
With him determined, fearless, death to share,
With all the courage of a calm despair,
The death for which she pray'd.
Alive she would not, if it fail'd her, fall
Into their hands—no—she had plann'd it all;
If Eric fell, there yet remain'd the leap
From off the embattled turret's giddy steep,
And she would take it then:
Her courage should not fail her in that hour,
Fearless of death she was beyond the power
Of these vile, ruthless men.
And surely Heaven, who knew her desperate strait,
The sin would pardon, if a sin it were;
Recording angels would commiserate
Her frantic choice, and from the Book of Fate
Would blot the crime if they must write it there,
Would keep no record of a maid's despair.

Meanwhile, throughout the castle, the wild band
Gain'd easily the upper hand;
The steward made a gallant stand,
And, for an aged man, a brave defence;
But at his mistress' feet, bereft of sense,
By coward blow was laid.
Calm, though alone, before those men of blood
The Lady there heroically stood;
Offer'd in vain the castle's treasured store,
And promised ransom, if they wanted more,

It should be freely paid ;
Pleaded and argued, threaten'd then at last,
Heaven's judgment on such crimes as theirs was pass'd,
Her curse an outraged God would hear,
His arm was ev'n outstretch'd to smite,
His vengeance swiftly would appear
On deeds of rapine of this night ;—
But all in vain, it hasten'd but her fate,
The ruffian Spaniards would no longer wait :
"Cast out the heretic !" the villains cried,
And dragg'd her to the casement open'd wide,
The sheer descent they flung her ruthless out,
Hailing her fall with loud demoniac shout.
Then through the vaulted rooms the savage horde,
With flaming torch dispersed and naked sword,
On lust and plunder bent ;
And disappearing in the murky glare,
These human fiends, and truly such they were,
Each to the business went.
From them in vain the women shrieking fly,
In vain the maids to Heaven for pity cry,
Their breath in vain is spent ;
The echoing walls alone reply,
Their captors jeer in mockery,
No answer else is sent,—
Save from the village flaming down below,
From whence arise like horrid shrieks of woe.
Upon the scene we draw the veil,
'Twas Magdeburg on lesser scale.

In the next hamlet, past the river's bend,
The good old Priest was dozing in his chair,—
It was his wont the twilight thus to spend,
For the long evening's study to prepare,—
Till by the fire-bell roused he caught the glare,

Which, quickly deepening to a lurid red,
The darkening sky already overspread.
Donning his cloak, to aid as best he might,
He hasten'd forth at once into the night.
'Twas as he fear'd, the village was in flames,
The neighbours were fast mustering to the call
(The dread alarm their promptest service claims,
Which they are wont to render freely all);
Lutherans and Catholics no difference knew,
For in this vale Religion's feuds were few;—
All hurried out to lend a helping hand,
Nor ever dream'd Religion fired the brand.
Judge, then, the simple folk's unfeign'd dismay
When in the village street an armèd guard
Denied them entrance, turn'd them all away,
Nor ev'n the Priest's expostulations heard.
Thus from the blazing village roughly spurn'd,
The good man first the castle's danger learn'd;
But hardly realized yon sandstone tower
Could be already in the Spaniards' power.
Thither he hurried—on the still night air
The hills re-echoed shrieks of wild despair,
Fierce shouts and horrid oaths, commingling, rang
With heavy blows and steel's resounding clang.
Out from the tower gleam'd high a blaze of light,
Shot like a meteor through the darkening night;
His heart misgave him, was it Hilda's room?
He could not yet distinguish in the gloom:
With flickering torches all the windows shone,
He saw the castle was already won.
Alas! its inmates—theirs an awful doom.

How had it fared with Hilda, Eric, there,
Awaiting death upon the turret stair,

Their courage rising with despair ?
Upon the charr'd oak door was thunder'd fast
Blow upon blow ; the Spaniards now at last
 Had brought a beam to bear,
 Which as a battering ram they slung
 By ropes which from the roof-tree hung.
Beneath its force the turret quaking rocks,
Ev'n massive oak can not withstand the shocks,
 The timbers soon must yield,
The lovers not for long that door will shield ;
Eric must trust to his good sword
To hold at bay the ruffian horde.
Though Hilda promised she would try
 His pistols as he fired to load,
Upon the steel he must rely
 Against the foe to bar the road ;
And while his strength should still remain
 Even desperation would not dare,
The passage to the leads to gain,
 To force the narrow winding stair,—
If but his strength held out ; but was he sure
His wounded limb would long the strain endure ?

With rending crash the batter'd door,
The ram it can resist no more,
 Falls inwards on the stair ;
But even in its fall it proved
A hindrance hard to be removed,
 Blocking the entrance there :
The Spaniards on each other gaze,
Crestfallen, in their blank amaze,
For by the expiring ember's blaze
 The narrow steps appear,
Damp with mosses overgrown,
Winding round the central stone,

Where a desperate man alone
An army need not fear.
Fitfully the red light play'd,
Flash'd from Eric's gleaming blade ;
All again drew back afraid,
Each held his life too dear :
Ev'n he on whom the lot was cast,
Whose fate it was to lead,
Pleaded the door could not be pass'd,—
A clear course he would need,
And even then it were a desperate task,
Such as his comrades had no right to ask.

While thus the baffled Spaniards doubtful stood,
Fearing to venture, thirsting still for blood,
The Priest had gain'd the tower.
Into the room he burst, with voice of ire
That roll'd like thunder, while his eyes flash'd fire
In lightning glance of power :
"Miscreants!" he cried, "not yours the Christian name,
Humanity ye may not even claim ;
Such deeds would very devils shame!
Christians forsooth ! nay, from the Church outcast,
The vilest scum, on you her curse is pass'd !
Authors ye are of villany and woe,
Yet dare not stand like men to face the foe !
Is't not enough that in your coward hands
The peasants writhe, and bleed the suffering lands,
But must ye now 'gainst women wage your war
With savage cruelties unknown before,
And tortures fiends could hardly imitate,—
This vale subject to Magdeburg's dread fate ?
Back, every man, ere yet it be too late,
While still is granted time,
While Heaven yet, long-suffering, spares,



"Miscreants!" he cried, "not yours the Christian name
Humanity ye may not even claim."

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Repent ye of your crime !
While still the vial of wrath prepares,
Ere yet it be outpour'd,
Repent ! Turn to the Lord,—
For ev'n for wretches such as ye,
Steep'd in all guilt's enormity,
Mercy with Him there still may be,—
His love is infinite ;
But if the day of grace ye lose,
His mercy wilfully refuse,
His long forbearance still abuse,
God will with vengeance smite.
Think ye His arm is shorten'd ? or His eye
Is blind to your so foul iniquity ?
Or think ye—fools!—that He hath stopp'd His ear,
And chooseth not your victims' cries to hear ?
Or think ye that the Church will intercede
And absolution grant you in your need ?
Be not deceived : God is not bought and sold,
Will have no portion of your plunder'd gold ;
Nor will indulgence granted by the priest
In the dread day of wrath avail the least :—
Your horrid crimes will then be all laid bare ;
Your victims all will rise in judgment there.
Turn from your evil ways—your course retrace,
Reject not even now the proffer'd grace ;
Nor add to your already damning roll
Another crime, to blacken more the soul ;
But fall upon your knees before the Throne,
And sue to Him for pardon Who alone,
By His redeeming Cross, can all your sins atone."

The brave Priest ended. Still the ruffian band
Around the turret undecided stand,
For God or Devil little though they reck'd,
His dauntless speech was not without effect ;

They found in it a fair excuse
To hold a parley for a truce ;
For, truth to tell, they did not care
To attempt the passage of the stair ;
Their honour saved, they need not fear
Their villain comrades' scorn or jeer,—
 A priest they might obey.
And, while they hesitate, without
Rings on the air a distant shout :
" Rhinelanders to the rescue ! " and
Glimmer the torches of a valiant band
 Mounting the rocky way.
The peasants marshal down below,
Burning to wreak their vengeance on the foe.

'Tis clear no time must now be lost,
The river must at once be cross'd.
They hurry down, their comrades call,
 Quickly they close in rank,
And hasten to regain the bank
 Ere the peasants on them fall,
And thus escape ; but yet not all,
For some, on gold and plunder bent,
 Remain too long behind,
And some on lust and wine intent
 The peasants drunken find ;
These without shrift are quickly swung,
And on the orchard trees are hung
 Swaying in the cold night wind ;—
For their lady's death enraged them sore,
 And their own most grievous wrongs ;
Mercy can claim no influence more,
 To Vengeance all belongs !
And such vile wretches, worse than fiends of Hell,
Whate'er their fate, in truth deserve it well.

Hilda and Eric thus were saved, but he
In that fierce leap had hurt his wounded knee.
Faint with the loss of blood, the kindly Priest,
As soon as e'er the rescue's tumults ceased
(For now the castle all was wreathed in fire
Lit by the Spaniards ere the last retire),
Took him to his own house, and Hilda too ;
Eric would need her nursing, well he knew,
And she herself would need a change of scene,

Smitten again by cruel Fortune's stroke :
Rudolph, her father too, had victims been,

For Eric, next, her heart was well-nigh broke ;
Now must she mourn the Lady Alma's fate,
Martyr'd by feign'd Religion's bigot hate.
Of all her kindred in one year bereft,
Eric alone to Hilda now is left ;
And he, to crown the troubles of the maid,
Again is on his bed of suffering laid.
Her sorrows seem at once to culminate,

For mortifies at length the wounded limb,
His only chance the leg to amputate,

And fever then takes fast its hold on him :
And days and weeks pass'd all unheeded by,
While Hilda nursed him, fearing he would die,
But buoying her fond heart with hope and courage high.

At length, one eve, towards the daylight's close,
Wakening from calmer sleep, the sufferer throws
A look of loving meaning on his bride,
As ever, at her post by his bedside.
The long delirium past, he was again
Himself, in his right mind, though still in pain :
Upon her face, in silence, long he gazed.

That he was thus awake not yet she knew,

But, when at last her look to him she raised,
From eye to meeting eye the love-light flew.
It needed not that he should even speak,
One glance had answer found his tongue would seek:
But nought of his full bliss would he himself deny,
Her voice must own the love flash'd from her happy eye

"Hilda," he said, "dost thou remember still
When, love, I press'd thee hard to be my bride,
That vintage noon, beneath the wooded hill,
Down by the margin of the murmuring tide?—
Dost thou remember, love, thy sweet selfwill,
Which vainly sought thy maiden heart to hide;
The welling tears which rose unbidden, till
Thou wert ev'n forced to turn thy face aside,
As to thy banter I more seriously replied?
Must I thy troth to thee return,—
Thy crippled champion wilt thou spurn,
Now it has come to a wooden limb?"
One piteous look she cast on him,
A look that could not feign:
"Oh, Eric! 'twas but a girlish whim,"
She cried, as her eyes gush'd rain;
"But, for that speech long as I live
Myself I never shall forgive:
But thou must, and my loyal love
Life-long shall my repentance prove.
A true, fond wife I'll be to thee,
Dearer than ever thou to me,
For thou at length art wholly mine.
And, Eric, I was thine;
My heart surrender'd on that day,
Although I knew it not.
I nevermore could say thee nay,
Whate'er might be thy lot;

I could not yield thy plighted heart,
And, Eric, we need never part.
Whilst thou on thy sick-bed wast laid,
The Chancellor a visit paid,
 Upon his road to France;
Though state affairs delay denied,
Yet found he time to turn aside,
 Hearing of our mischance:
He saw thee, all-unconscious, there,
And me o'erwhelm'd with grief and care,—
He bade me yield not to despair,
 But still keep hope and cheer.
Thy life the doctor did not fear,
And for the rest he hoped to find
A salve ev'n for a wounded mind,
 For warrior's proud distress.
With that the Chancellor went his way,
 And, Eric, canst thou guess?
A courier brought the other day,
 I must it e'en reveal,
Commission to a colonel's rank,
The governorship of our right bank,
 Under his hand and seal.
Thus we can still at Traubeneck stay,
The roof rebuild without delay;
And, when our time of mourning's past,
 The good old Priest shall join our hands;
For he has embraced our faith at last,
 For ever burst Rome's fettering bands:
And now my patient I must not excite
 With too much e'en of joy and bliss.
 What, sir! a parting kiss?
Another? There! Another still? Good night!

* * * * *

Fifty years have sped by.—Hark ! hark to the bells,
As they ring out again in a joyous chime ;
Far over the water their music swells,
Now louder, now fainter, from time to time,
But ever repeating one gladsome rhyme :
“Speed hither away—golden wedding day.
Golden wedding day,—speed hither away !”
To all the country they seem to say.
Peal follows peal, the steeple rocks,
And not in vain, from all around,
Far as the bells can clash their sound,
The country to the castle flocks,—
Men, women, and children all in their best,
All for the festival gaily dress'd.
This generation does not know
The thirty years of blood and woe,
The war is over long ago ;
Its orphans long since dried their tears :
Only their elders can look back
Upon those awful thirty years,
With all their dreadful memories black.
The burgher now no longer fears
From Friedland's ruffians storm and sack,
The peasant smiling harvests rears,
And grass grows green on Tilly's track ;
The earth has yielded full increase
For five-and-thirty years in peace.
For five-and-thirty years their Right,—
Won by Gustave's resistless might,
Seal'd by his blood for it outpour'd,
Held still by Sweden's conquering sword,
Though some allies their aid refused,
And Saxony against her turn'd,—
In peace the Lutherans now have used ;
For terms of truce still Sweden spurn'd,

Until she had her end attain'd,
Religion's Freedom fully gain'd.
But, though the German Lutheran North
Is saved from Rome and Austria's wrath,
Those thirty years have left a trace,
That centuries will scarce efface,
And Germany, and all the world,
Backward in wealth and culture hurl'd.
Religion's wars must ever be
Most mark'd by Hate's intensity!
Oh! that the world were wiser grown,
Nor Priest, nor Priestcraft, then could cause,
Nor Despot, bolstering up his throne,
Among mankind these awful wars.
The nations long shall sigh in vain
For Peace and Plenty's promised reign,
While millions mustering under arms
Raise year by year War's dread alarms.
One red campaign is scarcely done,
Ere others, bloodier, are begun;
And Europe still must ever be
Contending races' battle-ground,
From Arctic to Ægean Sea,
From eastern to her western bound,
As long as all her youth is found,
Marshall'd in camps in stern array,
To Famine, War, and Death a prey.

England! to thee the chance was given
This earth almost to change to heaven.
All Europe then look'd up to thee,
The Ocean own'd thy sovereignty,
When the great Conqueror's star once bright,
Paled at the Nile's, Trafalgar's fight,
And set on Waterloo's red plain;—

The world look'd up to thee—in vain!
For what thy warriors, statesmen, forced,
Victors on both the land and main,
From the proud Tyrant, thou hast lost;
Thou wouldst not Europe's Arbitress remain,
Nor to thy lofty mission couldst attain.
Our sires unflinching bore the strain,
Their sons thy destiny forgot,
Far too intent on sordid gain,
Else never had been fired a shot
On Europe's fields again in wrath.
Had but thy fiat thunder'd forth,
Hadst thou then but proclaim'd that war
Henceforward should be waged no more,
The nations now would never be
Plunged deep in blood and misery.
'Tis now too late ;—on Europe's ground
Thy thunders are but empty sound,
For, since the bolt thou wilt not wield,
Despots need no attention yield ;
Thy statesmen labour with the sense,
Alas! of England's impotence ;
Thy old ally must now the sceptre sway
Which thou in indolence hast cast away!

Well, be it so, it is not all too late,
Let others Arbiters in Europe be,
Thy future still may even yet be great,
Thine is the boundless Empire of the sea ;
God grant that never, never come the day
When thou that Empire too shalt cast away.
But, if old England must degenerate,
If weak senility must be her fate,
Thank Heaven, the English races will remain ;
And sons more worthy of their gallant sires

In other hemispheres will yet attain,
Where the bold Anglo-Saxon still aspires,
To the high mission which she fail'd to grasp,
Empire embracing all in holy clasp,
Freedom and Peace, Religion, Unity,
And peerless greatness, in itself so strong,
That consciousness of might security
And sacred pledge and gage shall ever be
To all the world against oppressive wrong.
The old, adventurous spirit is not dead,
Let the old sense of honour still be there ;
Though England be not then the Empire's head,
Given this English Empire, need we care ?
Nay, rather, should we not be thankful, proud
That to our race this greatness is allow'd ?
For vigorous children will their sires outgrow,
And loving parents would ev'n have it so.

With Germany we then shall power divide,
Two mighty, kindred Empires side by side,
For the world's peace for evermore allied.
Our Empire shall new continents embrace,
Peopled by rising nations of our race :
As we ourselves from many peoples came,
So all who choose their part with us may claim ;
Celtic and Saxon, Dane and Norman we,
Our Empire never shall exclusive be ;
But all true hearts, the good, the brave, the free,
All law-abiding sons of Liberty,
Sworn foes to despot-tyrannies :
All to whom greatness most of all is dear,
Since greatness is exempt from servile fear,
Who wish not o'er mankind to domineer ;
But would in peace their glorious standard rear,
Religion's, Freedom's, votaries,

Yet recognise that Freedom can belong
To the great only, to the brave and strong.

Then shall this world again an Eden be,
Bloodshed shall be no more, nor tyranny ;
Priestcraft and Ignorance no more shall bind
In Superstition's fetters then mankind ;
And Rome's dread power, for ever pass'd away,
Shall yield to Charity's benignant sway.
The arts shall flourish in the stead of wars,
And cultured leisure take the place of toil,
For Nature will disclose her hidden stores
To ampler Knowledge of her fixed laws ;
Research will ev'n the elements despoil ;
Science will pierce the higher mysteries,
What in the future's womb, veil'd darkly, lies ;
Learning, divorced from sordid greed of gain,
Succeed in baffling both Disease and Pain ;
And Wisdom will to all Contentment bring,
Contentment, Happiness—the one good thing.
Thus, first, since it from Chaos took its birth,
Man will entirely then possess the earth.

If this be in our power to bring about,
It is our mission, that we cannot doubt ;
With it compared, weigh'd truly in the scale,
Our hoarded wealth, our piled-up gold, will fail,
Used only as a means to selfish joys,
As mere indulgence soon the palate cloy.
Nay, not as ancient Rome shall England die,
By wealth corrupted and iniquity,
Each generation feebler than the last,
Forgetful of the mighty, glorious past,
Happy to bribe the foe with craven gold,
Afraid her birthright, Empire, more to hold ;

Fast losing all that brave men virtues deem,
Sinking still lower in the world's esteem,
Displacing with a feign'd morality
Our valorous fathers' sense of honour high,
Accepting insult *they* could never brook
With coward hypocrites' meek, saintlike look;
Who hide their fear beneath Religion's cloak,
Submitting humbly to their Father's stroke.
Religion, Freedom, must be aye allied!
Servility is even worse than pride!
Then will we not, as they would have us, yield
Our English pride, and, craven, quit the field:
Nay, we will still among the nations hold
The foremost place, not by the power of gold,
But by our fathers' good old English Right,
Their resolution's stubborn, dogged might:
Honour and courage shall resistless be,
Religion, bulwark to our Liberty.

Thus, England still shall flourish to all time,
The mighty parent of still mightier States;
As vigorous in her age as in her prime,
Superior to the enervating fates!
England shall flourish, and the English race
Through the wide world shall find its dwelling-place.
The cradle still our storm-toss'd isle shall be,
Rock'd by the surges of the fostering sea,
From whence her hardy sons shall issue forth,
As ev'n of old they swept down from the North,
Wave upon wave, and still on conquest bent,
To win new continents; but not by arms,
Plunder no longer now their fierce intent,
Their advent signal not for War's alarms;
No beacons flaring on a ravaged coast
Will inland spread the terror of their name;

Far different triumphs they than War's shall boast,
Far worthier, too, the victories they shall claim;
As pioneers, still leading Freedom's van,
Theirs the proud mission—sovereignty of Man :—
Nature herself their glory to control,
Their destiny to rule—to rule the whole ;—
The earth, the sea,—ay, and at length the air,
Rather than yield, like Alexander, there
For want of worlds to conquer to despair.—
But I have wander'd from my tale away,
Though towards the end my muse ought not to stray ;
But then the muse is wilful, and will go,
Just like her sex, her way, I may not say her no.

All day ring out the merry bells
Far over the brimming Rhine,
And song proclaims, and laughter tells
The power of its golden wine ;
All day the joyous peasants feast
Upon the best of cheer ;
The flowing goblets never ceased,
The meats fast disappear :
To rustic music's simple strains,
Trip blushing maids and loving swains :
The groaning tables their elders crowd,
And still, while the wine-cups pass around,
Re-echo the songs in chorus loud,
And then shout applause as in duty bound.
The young and the old, in a different way,
All in high good-humour keep holiday.

A pretty scene, and pleasing song,
But here we must not linger long.
Leaving the village to mirth and glee,
To joyous dance and revelry,

We climb once more the rocky hill
Where Traubeneck's tower is standing still.
It is still the same which erst we knew,
The same red sandstone's glowing hue ;
For the winter storms, the summer rains,
Wash'd out long since the fire's black stains ;
What marks remain of the Spaniards' brand,
Time has toned down with artist hand.
But the fifty years have left no trace
Upon the castle's ruddy face ;
As they have left no lasting smarts
Within its owners' loving hearts.

We enter the hall, where a table is spread,
Husband and wife sit there at its head :
Eric and Hilda at once we know,
 Though the golden tresses are silver now ;
Though Eric's locks are as white as snow,
 And age has deep furrow'd his lofty brow,
His honest features are ever the same,
 His port the warrior's, and his eye
May still to the eagle's glance lay claim,
 For it gleams as bright as in days gone by.
And the veteran's bearing may well be proud,
 Well may happiness beam on Hilda's face,
For a joyous party the table crowd
 Of their loved grandchildren, a goodly race.
In the eldest, a maiden of seventeen,
 The Hilda of bygone years we trace,
And boys and girls are ranged between,
 Till we come to the baby's most honour'd place ;
The pet of the household, his grandmother's pride,
Throned high in his chair by Hilda's side.
But, if upon one the grandfather's eye
More than on others dwells lovingly,

It is on the maiden in whom he sees
Renew'd his Hilda's form,—
Her deep blue eyes, her golden hair,
Her peach complexion, lily fair,
Her playful glance and her graceful ease,
Which, that glad spring so long ago,
Though it seems but as yesterday,
Down by the Rhine's soft murmuring flow,
As hand in hand they used to stray,
Took all his heart by storm.
And could we read the veteran's mind,
His inmost soul unveil,
Nought of regret we there should find,
Though youth and beauty fail;—
For youth and beauty full soon he knew
To himself and Hilda would Heaven renew,
And her loveliness restore,—
Far beyond e'en the glories of maiden pride,
When first they wander'd side by side
Along the brimming river's tide,—
To endure for evermore.

Their wedded life had ever proved
As peaceful as the summer stream,
Each by the other fondly loved,
Each in the other's being moved,
Until it well might seem,
A foretaste even on earth below
Of Heaven's full love's eternal flow.
To them was born one only boy,
The father's pride, the mother's joy;
A noble boy, with spirit high,
Courageous even in infancy,
Who early show'd desire to roam,
The restless daring of his race,

Straying in childhood far from home,
Not quiet long in any place;
Except when, on his father's knee
On the long dark winter nights,
His eager eyes drank in with glee
His pictures of hard-fought fights;
Or when wandering by the Rhine alone
On the sultry summer's day,
Entranced by the gurgling water's moan,
And the sunbeam's dazzling play;
Or gazing on its wide expanse
When the silver ripples by moonlight dance;
His spirit long'd in intensity
For the sailor's venturous life,
Yearn'd for the sea, the boundless sea,
For the storm, and battle-strife.

What wonder when the youth once heard
In the quiet Rhineland vale,
That the mighty Blake at last prepared
The Spanish main to sail,
His yearnings he could not restrain,
Even Hilda's pleadings were in vain;
For Eric said, "The boy must go!
His is the Viking's vent'rous blood;
And the Spaniard ever was our foe,
Our Lutheran Faith hath aye withstood.
He can no better service take,—
We have no Gustave more,—
Than under the gallant, generous Blake;
'Tis still Religion's war!
England must wrest from Catholic Spain
Her conquests in the Western Main,
For a Protestant Power alone must be
Mistress supreme upon the sea!

Religion, Freedom, soon would die
Could Spain make good her sovereignty !
And Rome again would rear her head
In spite of Gustave's life-blood shed ;
His victories would not endure,
Our Faith no longer be secure :—
We may, indeed, rejoice he draws
His weapon in so just a cause."

The youth thus left the peaceful Rhine
For the heaving stormy sea,
His home, begirt by the clustering vine,
For the good ship bounding free.
He sail'd to Algiers, Tunis first,
When England's thunders vengeful burst
Upon the tyrant Dey :
Cadiz his vessels next blockade,
Of two plate ships rich prizes made,
While the Admiral bore away
For Santa Cruz, with sixteen sail,
Where 'neath the castle guns, in hail
Of its walls, the plate fleet lay :
The anchorage seven strong forts command
The gunners to their pieces stand,
But the wind blows in the bay.
It had been a long exciting race,
Blake would not thus give o'er the chase,
And lose his promised prey :
Consumed with scurvy, weak and ill,
The gallant sailor ventured still
To fight a glorious day :
Full on the foe his ships he drove,
Four hours the Spaniards vainly strove,
Then from their vessels fled :

Which, every one, were set on fire,
Ere the English from the bay retire,
Despite their balls and lead.

World o'er since then the youth had been,
And often Death's grim face had seen;
Familiar with his every form,
Battling with tempest and with storm;
In desperate action borne his part,
With courage high and dauntless heart;
But never such a glorious day,
His fortune e'er again to share;
For Blake to his rest had pass'd away,
And none with him could more compare.
Years of adventure still he pass'd,
But scarr'd and bronzed return'd at last,
To Traubeneck brought an English bride,
To make her home by the glad Rhine's tide.
And there they sit on this festive day,
With their children around them in brave array,
And Hilda caresses their baby boy
With even more than a mother's pride,
And Eric gazes in rapturous joy
On the blooming maiden by his side;
His cup of bliss full and flowing o'er,
On earth he can wish for nothing more.

The meats are over, still joyous ring
The merry peals by the brimming Rhine;
And now the household servants bring
A monster flask of golden wine:
'Tis a vintage of fifty odd years ago;
Well do Eric and Hilda that vintage know.

The banquet table with flowers is crown'd,
The children's chattering tongues are still'd,
While the crystal goblets are brimm'd all round,
And even the baby's glass is fill'd ;
Then Eric rises from his chair,
And lifts his golden glass on high,
And fondly strokes his grandchild's hair,
But on Hilda he casts his loving eye ;
"Children," he said, "ye have heard us tell,
So oft ye know it almost as well
As ourselves, how as boy and girl we stray'd
One spring by the rippling Rhine ;
And how we feasted in the shade,
When was press'd this noble wine,
That joyous vintage afternoon ;
And how by the light of the rising moon
We sail'd on the river's breast :
Well, it seems to us but as yesterday,
Though fifty years have pass'd away
Since we in our loves were blest :
Now, while the glad bells joyful chime
Let us drink to that happy bygone time ;
To the memory of departed friends,
Whom we in heaven shall meet again
When our brief earthly sojourn ends,
Where suffering is unknown and pain ;
To all we loved in days gone by
We drink now to their memory.
But first of all to my noble King
Gustavus the Great, the Brave, the Good ;
Whose name through all the world shall ring.
The world he saved with his own life-blood :—
King, warrior, statesman, such as he
Never again the world will see.

* * * * *

"Our time is short, loosed are our earthly ties,
Before you, lads, the opening future lies,
'Tis yours his noble Cause still to maintain,
Religion, Freedom, must not cry in vain.
Had Gustave lived, the work so well begun
Had not been now already half undone;
The nations had been really, truly free,
Europe the home of Peace and Liberty:
But, come what may, hold fast to his good cause,
It must be all triumphant in the end;
If need be, to maintain Fair Freedom's laws
Your life-blood hesitate not free to spend.
Ours is a roving, restless, vent'rous race
Ever inclined, in youth at least, to roam;
Our fathers knew of no fix'd dwelling place—
Or land, or sea, to them alike was home;
But where they ventured, on the land or sea,
They aye remain'd the sons of Liberty.
Yours is a nobler calling, not alone
Freedom's, Religion's, Cause, allied ye own;—
Yet hardly dare I venture to advise,
From Europe's shores it seems ev'n Freedom flies;
And England, who should her best bulwark be,
Inclines again, alas, to Popery.
For her it was indeed an evil day
When the Sixth Stuart southward cross'd the Tweed,
With the great Tudor pass'd her might away—
Elizabeth! of thee had England need!
Had pedant James or weak-kneed Charles possess'd
A tithe thy spirit, Europe were at rest;
Had England but with Sweden been allied,
We once for all had broken Jesuit pride:—
Thou with Gustavus hadst thy might combined
To free from Rome for ever all mankind;
Thine was his hero soul and thine his giant mind.

"My sons, our Viking fathers boldly tried
 The unknown seas upon a venturous quest ;
 Upon a dim tradition they relied,
 Which told that somewhere in the distant west,
 Beyond the sunset lay a land of rest.
 They had no charts, no compass was their guide
 To shape their course on ocean's trackless tide ;
 Their souls, weird tales, dread phantasies opprest,
 They bravely sought the Islands of the Blest ;—
 Reckless of dangers, what might e'er befall,
 Undaunted courage should bear up through all.
 To you, if Europe scope no more affords,
 If here Religion's, Freedom's, light must die,
 Like them of old to you are left your swords,
 There, if ye list, ye may their temper try,
 And free the West from Spanish tyranny :—
 The bravest, boldest spirits venture there,
 Men who would die for Faith and Liberty ;
They will succeed, for *they* the extreme will dare.
 Though Europe yet again enslaved may be
 The New World none the less shall still be free !
 English and Dutchman, German, too, and Swede,
 All who for Faith and Freedom proudly bleed,
 Shall in the West a mighty Empire found,
 Rear'd not upon the quicksand's shifting ground,
 Swift to succumb before the tempest shock,
 But on Religion's aye enduring rock,
 With Freedom for its chiefest corner-stone,
 Relying on themselves and God alone.

"Children, this Empire ye may help to rear
 In these new lands far distant in the West ;
 Our fathers were not wrong, it would appear,
 They are indeed the Islands of the Blest.

Ye who the Vikings' roving spirit claim—
 Ye cannot wish in life a nobler aim ;
 'Tis *yours* this new-found World to populate,
 Which shall the Old in time regenerate,
 And by the moral force of Freedom's laws
 Shall triumph o'er conflicting nations' hate,
 Forbid throughout the world despotic wars,
 Its varied races all consolidate,
 Knit to each other in the holy cause
 To further all their Great Creator's plan—
 Peace upon earth, from Man goodwill to Man.

"This may be yours, my life-course now is run,
 I only may the glorious future show :
 Had Gustave lived, through him it had been done,
 And in his footsteps ye may safely go ;
 Had he but lived—it *was* not Heaven's Will,—
 But think not that his blood was shed in vain,
 Though it may take long centuries to fulfil
 The Hero's work, his Genius will remain ;
 And through the ages will incentive be
 To battle still for Faith and Liberty,
 Until at length the glorious task be done,—
 Religion's, Freedom's, triumph fully won !"

* * * * *

Again burst forth the bells in joyous peals
 Louder than ever on the evening air,
 Round the hush'd circle wrapt amazement steals,
 The children gaze in spellbound wonder there :
 In Eric's radiant face they mark with awe
 A glory that till now they never saw.

And while the merry bells ring out their chime
We take our leave, and quit the festive hall;
Down through the woods, by mouldering vineyard wall
We, lingering, pass, to turn full many a time
And gaze upon the well-known landmarks all,—
The pebbly beach, the spreading oak-trees tall:
As the steep hills by rock-hewn steps we climb,
The slanting sunbeams on the castle fall.
And thus, upon their golden wedding-day,
To Hilda, Eric, fond farewell we say,
And wend, from Traubeneck, back to the world, our way.



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